THE HOUSE OF ARDEN

by E. NESBIT

THE NEW YORK REVIEW
CHILDREN'S COLLECTION

THE HOUSE OF ARDEN

A STORY FOR CHILDREN

By E. NESBIT

CHAPTER I.

ARDEN'S LORD

It had been a great house once, with farms and fields, money and jewels—with tenants and squires and men at arms. There had been Ardens in Saxon times, and there were Ardens still—but few and impoverished. And of the male Ardens there were now two only—an old man and a child.

The old man was Lord Arden, the head of the house, and he lived lonely in a little house built of the fallen stones that Fame and Cromwell's round-shot had cast from the castle walls. The child was Edred Arden, and he lived in a house in a clean, wind-swept town on a cliff.

It was a bright-faced house with bow-windows and a green balcony that looked out over the sparkling sea. It was a pretty house, and it would have been a pleasant house but for one thing—the lodgers. For I cannot conceal from you any longer that Edred Arden lived with his aunt, and that his aunt let lodgings.

Miss Arden could not help it. It happened like this.

Edred and his sister Elfrida were at school. Miss Arden lived near the school, so that she could see the children often. She was getting her clothes ready for her wedding, and the gentleman who was going to marry her was coming home from South America, where he had made a fortune. The children's father was coming home from South America, too, with the fortune that he had made, for he and Miss Arden's sweetheart were partners.

And then the news came that father and Uncle Jim had been captured by brigands, and all the money was lost, too, and there was nothing left but the house on the cliff. So Miss Arden took the children from the expensive school in London, and they all went to live in the cliff house, and as there

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was no money to live on, and no other way of making money to live on except letting lodgings, Miss Arden let them, like the brave lady she was, and did it well. And then came the news that father and Uncle Jim were dead, and for a time the light of life went out in Cliff House.

This was two years ago; but the children had never got used to the lodgers. They hated them. When there were lodgers the children and their aunt had to live in the very top and the very bottom of the house—in the attics and the basement, in fact.

When there were no lodgers they used all the rooms in turn, to keep them aired. But the children liked the big parlour room best, because there all the furniture had belonged to dead-and-gone Ardens, and all the pictures on the walls were of Ardens dead and gone.

Edred and Elfrida went to school every day, but the only part of lessons they liked was the home work, when, if Aunt Edith had time to help them, geography became like adventures, history like story-books, and even arithmetic suddenly seemed to mean something.

The front-door bell was rung by the post man; he brought three letters. The first and second were of no consequence, but the third was THE letter, which is really the seed, and beginning, and backbone, and rhyme, and reason of this story.

The third letter had a very odd effect on Aunt Edith. She read it once, and rubbed her hand across her eyes. Then she got up and stood under the chandelier, and read it again. Then she read it a third time, and then she said, "Oh!"

"What is it, auntie?" Elfrida asked, anxiously, "is it the taxes?" It had been the taxes once, and Elfrida had never forgotten.

"No; it's not the taxes, darling," said Aunt Edith; "on the contrary."

"Oh, auntie, I *am* so glad," they both said, and said it several times before they asked again, "What is it?"

"I think—I'm not quite sure—but I think it's a ship come home—oh, just a quite tiny little bit of a ship—a toy boat—hardly more than that. But I must go up to London to-morrow the first thing, and see if it really is a ship, and, if so, what sort of ship it is. Mrs. Blake shall come in, and you'll be good as gold, children, won't you?"

"Yes—oh, yes," said the two.

"I must go by the eight-thirty train. I wish I could think of some way of—of amusing you," she ended, for she was too kind to say "of keeping you out of mischief for the day," which was what she really thought. "I'll bring you something jolly for your birthday, Edred. Wouldn't you like to spend the day with nice Mrs. Hammond?"

"Oh, *no*," said Edred, and added, on the inspiration of the moment, "Why mayn't we have a picnic—just Elf and me—on the downs, to keep my birthday? It doesn't matter it being the day before, does it?"

"Very well, you shall," said the aunt. "Only wear your old clothes, and always keep in sight of the road. Yes; you can have a whole holiday. And now to bed."

Next morning Aunt Edith went off by the eight-thirty train. The children's school satchels were filled, not with books, but with buns; instead of exercise books there were sandwiches; and in the place of inky pencil-boxes were two magnificent boxes of peppermint creams which had cost a whole shilling each, and had been recklessly bought by Aunt Edith in the agitation of the parting hour when they saw her off at the station.

They went slowly up the red-brick-paved sidewalk that always looks as though it had just been washed, and when they got to the top of the hill they stopped and looked at each other.

"It can't be wrong," said Edred.

"She never told us not to," said Elfrida.

"I've noticed," said Edred, "that when grown-up people say 'they'll see about' anything you want it never happens."

"I've noticed that, too," said Elfrida. "Auntie always said she'd see about taking us there."

"Yes, she did."

"We won't be mean and sneaky about it," Edred insisted, though no one had suggested that he *would* be mean and sneaky. "We'll tell auntie directly she gets back."

"Of course," said Elfrida, rather relieved, for she had not felt at all sure that Edred meant to do this.

"After all," said Edred, "it's *our* castle. We *ought* to go and see the cradle of our race. That's what it calls it in 'Cliffgate and its Environs.' I say, let's call it a pilgrimage. The satchels will do for packs, and we can get halfpenny walking-sticks with that penny of yours. We can put peas in our shoes, if you like," he added, generously.

But Elfrida refused, and they walked on.

The town was getting thinner, like the tract of stocking that surrounds a hole: the houses were farther apart and had large gardens. In one of them a maid was singing to herself as she shook out the mats, a thing which maids don't do much in towns—

"Good luck," says I to my sweetheart,
"For I will love you true
And all the while we've got to part,
My luck shall go with you."

"That's lucky for us," said Elfrida, amiably.

"We're not her silly sweet heart," said Edred.

"No; but we heard her sing it, and he wasn't here, so he couldn't. There's a sign-post. I wonder how far we've gone? I'm getting awfully tired."

"You'd better have been pilgrims," said Edred. "*They* never get tired, however many peas they have in their shoes."

"I will now," said Elfrida.

"You can't," said Edred; "it's too late. We're miles and miles from the stick shop."

"Very well, I sha'n't go on," said Elfrida. "You got out of bed the wrong side this morning. I've tried to soft-answer you as hard as ever I could all the morning, and I'm not going to try any more, so there."

"Don't, then," said Edred, bitterly. "Go along home if you like. You're only a girl."

"I'd rather be only a girl than what *you* are," said she.

"And what's that, I should like to know."

Elfrida stopped and shut her eyes tight.

"Don't, don't, don't, don't," she said. "I won't be cross. I won't be cross, I won't be cross. Pax. Drop it. Don't let's—"

"Don't let's what?"

"Quarrel about nothing," said Elfrida, opening her eyes and walking on very fast. "We're always doing it. Auntie says it's a

habit. If boys are so much splendider than girls, they ought to be able to stop when they like."

"Suppose they don't like?" said he, kicking his boots in the thick white dust.

"Well," said she, "I'll say I'm sorry first Will *that* do?"

"I was just going to say it first myself," said Edred, in aggrieved tones "Come on," he added, more generously, "here's the sign-post. Let's see what it says."

It said, quite plainly and without any nonsense about it, that they had come a mile and three-quarters, adding, most unkindly, that it was eight miles to Arden Castle. But, it said, it was a quarter of a mile to Nunhill Station

"Let's go by train," said Edred, grandly.

"No money," said Elfrida, very forlornly indeed

"Aha!" said Edred; "now you'll see. *I'm* not mean about money. I brought my new shilling."

"Oh, Edred," said the girl, stricken with remorse, "you *are* noble."

"Pooh!" said the boy, and his ears grew red with mingled triumph and modesty, "that's nothing Come on."

So it was from the train that the pilgrims got their first sight of Arden Castle. It stands up boldly on the cliff where it was set to keep off foreign foes and guard the country round about it. But of all its old splendour there is now nothing but the great walls that the grasses and wild flowers grow on, and round towers whose floors and ceilings have fallen away, and roofless chambers where owls build, and brambles and green ferns grow strong and thick

The children walked to the castle along the cliff path where the skylarks were singing like mad up in the pale sky, and the bean fields, where the bees were busy, gave out the sweetest scent in the world

"Let's have dinner here," said Elfrida, when they reached the top of a little mound from which they could look down on the castle So they had it. And all the time they were munching they looked down on the castle, and loved it more and more

"Don't you wish it was real, and we lived in it?" Elfrida asked, when they had eaten as much as they wanted

"It is real, what there is of it."

"Yes; but I mean if it was a house with chimneys, and fireplaces, and doors with bolts, and glass in the windows."

"I wonder if we could get in?" said Edred

"We might climb over," said Elfrida, looking hopefully at the enormous walls, sixty feet high, in which no gate or gap showed.

"There's an old man going across that field—no, not that one, the very green field Let's ask him."

So they left their satchels lying on the short turf, and caught up with the old man just as he had chcked his garden gate behind him and had turned to go up the bricked path between beds of woodruff, and anemones, and narcissus, and tulips of all colours.

The old man turned and saw at his gate two small figures dressed in what is known as sailor costume They saw a very wrinkled old face with snowy hair and mutton chop whiskers of a silvery whiteness. There were very bright twinkling blue eyes in the sun-browned old face, and on the clean-shaven mouth a kind, if light, smile

"Well?" said he; "and what do *you* want?"

"We want to know——" said Elfrida.

"About the castle," said Edred. "Can we get in and look at it?"

"I've got the keys," said the old man, and put his hand in at his door and reached them from a nail.

"I s'pose no one *lives* there?" said Elfrida.

"Not now," said the old man, coming back along the garden path "Lord Arden, he died a fortnight ago come Tuesday, and the place is shut up till the new lord's found."

"I wish *I* was the new lord," said Edred, as they followed the old man along the lane.

"An' how old might *you* be?" the old man asked.

"I'm ten nearly. It's my birthday to-morrow," said Edred. "How old are you?"

"Getting on for eighty I've seen a deal in my time If you was the young lord you'd have a chance none of the rest of them ever had—you being the age you are."

"What sort of chance?"

"Why," said the old man, "don't you know the saying? I thought everyone knowed it hereabouts."

"What saying?"

"I ain't got the wind for saying and walking, too," said the old man, and stopped, "leastways, not potery" He drew a deep breath and said:

> When Arden's lord still beketh ten
> And may not see his nine again,
> Let Arden stand as Arden may
> On Arden Knoll at death of day
> If he have skill to say the spell
> He shall find the treasure, and all be well!

"I say!" said both the children "And where's Arden Knoll?" Edred asked.

"Up yonder" He pointed to the mound where they had had lunch

Elfrida inquired, "What treasure?"

But that question was not answered—then.

"If I'm to talk I must set me down," said the old man. "Shall us set down here, or set down inside of the castle?"

Two curiosities struggled, and the stronger won. "In the castle," said the children

So it was in the castle, on a pillar fallen from one of the chapel arches, that the old man sat down and related the story.

"Well, then," said the old man, "you see, the Ardens was always great gentry. I've heard say there's always been Ardens here since before William the Conkrer, whoever *he* was."

"Ten sixty six," said Edred to himself.

"An' they had their ups and downs like other folks, great and small And once, when there was a war or trouble of some sort abroad, there was a lot of money, and jewlery, and plate hidden away. That's what it means by treasure And the man who hid it got killed—ah, them was unsafe times to be alive in, I tell you—and nobody never knew where the treasure was hid."

"Did they ever find it?"

"Ain't I telling you? An' a wise woman that lived in them old ancient times, they went to her to ask her what to do to find the treasure, and she had a fit directly, what you'd call a historical fit nowdays. She never said

nothing worth hearing without she was in a fit, and she made up the saying all in potery whilst she was in her fit, and that was all they could get out of her. And she never would say what the spell was. Only when she was a dying, Lady Arden, that was then, was very took up with nursing of her, and before she breathed her lastest she told Lady Arden the spell." He stopped for lack of breath.

"And what is the spell?" said the children, much more breathless than he.

"Nobody knows. But I've 'eard say it's in a book in the libery in the house yonder. But it ain't no good, because there's never been a Lord Arden come to his title without he's left his ten years far behind him."

Edred had a queerer feeling in his head than you can imagine; his hands got hot and dry, and then cold and damp.

"I suppose," he said, "you've got to be *Lord* Arden? It wouldn't do if you were just plain John or James or Edred Arden? Because my name's Arden, and I would like to have a try."

The old man stooped, caught Edred by the arm, pulled him up, and stood him between his knees.

"Let's have a look at you, sonny," he said, and had a look. "Aye," he said, "you're an Arden, for sure. To think of me not seeing that. I might have seen your long nose and your chin that sticks out like a spur. I ought to have known it anywhere. But my eyes ain't what they was. If you *was* Lord Arden—— What's your father's name—his chrissened name, I mean?"

"Edred, the same as mine. But father's dead," said Edred, gravely.

"And your grandf'er's name? It wasn't George, was it—George William?"

"Yes, it was," said Edred. "How did you know?"

The old man let go Edred's arms and stood up. Then he touched his forehead and said:—

"I've worked on the land 'ere man and boy, and I'm proud I've lived to see another Lord Arden take the place of him as is gone. Laukalive, boy, don't garp like that," he added, sharply. "You're Lord Arden right enough."

"I—I can't be," gasped Edred.

"Auntie said Lord Arden was a relation of ours—a sort of great uncle—cousin."

"That's it, missy," the old man nodded. "Lord Arden—Chrissen name James—'e was first cousin to Mr. George as was your grandf'er. His son was Mr. Edred, as is your father. The late lord not 'avin' any sons—nor daughters neither for the matter of that—the title comes to your branch of the family. I've heard Singsworthy, the lawyer's apprentice, tell it over fifty times this last three weeks. You're Lord Arden, I tell you."

"If I am," said Edred, "I shall say the spell and find the treasure."

"You'll have to be quick about it," said Elfrida. "You'll be over ten the day after to-morrow."

"So I shall," said Edred.

"When you're Lord Arden," said the old man, very seriously—"I mean, when you grow up to enjoy the title—as, please God, you may—you remember the poor and needy, young master—that's what you do."

"If I find the treasure I will," said Edred.

"You do it whether or no," said the old man. "I must be getting along home. You'd like to play about a bit, eh? Well, bring me the keys when you've done. I can trust you not to hurt your own place, that's been in the family all these hundreds of years."

"I should think you could!" said Edred, proudly. "Good bye, and thank you."

"Good bye, my lord," said the old man, and went.

"I say," said Edred, with the big bunch of keys in his hand—"if I *am* Lord Arden!"

"You are! you are!" said Elfrida. "I am perfectly certain you are. And I suppose I'm Lady Arden. How perfectly ripping! What's up?"

Edred was frowning and pulling the velvet covering of moss off the big stone on which he had absently sat down.

"Do you think it's burglarish," he said, slowly, "to go into your own house without leave?"

"Not if it *is* your own house. Of course not," said Elfrida.

"But suppose it isn't? They might put you in prison for it."

"You could tell the policeman you thought it was yours. I say, Edred, let's——"

"It's not vulgar curiosity, like auntie says, it's the spell I want," said the boy.

"As if I didn't know that," said the girl, contemptuously. "But where's the house?"

She might well ask, for there was no house to be seen—only the great grey walls of the castle, with their fine fringe of flowers and grass showing feathery against the pale blue of the June sky. Here and there, though, there were grey wooden doors set in the grey of the stone.

"It must be one of those," Edred said

"We'll try all the keys and all the doors till we find it."

So they tried all the keys and all the doors. It was the last door they tried that led into a long garden, and at the end of this garden was a narrow house with a red roof, wedged tightly in between two high grey walls that belonged to the castle.

All the blinds were down, and it was very slowly, and with a feeling of being on tiptoe and holding their breaths, that they went up to those blinded windows that looked like sightless eyes.

The front door was locked, and none of the keys would fit it.

Elfrida almost screamed, half with horror and half with admiration of his daring, when Edred climbed up to a little window by means of an elder tree that grew close to it, tried to open the window, and when he found it fast deliberately pushed his elbow through the glass.

"Thus," he said, rather unsteadily, "the heir of Arden Castle re-enters his estates."

He got the window open and disappeared through it, and presently a blind went up, a French window opened, and there was Edred beckoning his sister with the air of a conspirator.

It needed an effort to obey his signal, but she did it. He closed the French window, drew down the blind again, and —

"Oh, don't let's," said Elfrida.

"Nonsense," said Edred, "there's nothing to be frightened of. It's just like our rooms at home."

It was. They went all over the house, and it certainly was. Some of the upper rooms were very bare, but all the furniture was of the same kind as Aunt Edith's, and there were the same kind of pictures. Only the library was different. It was a very large room, and there were no pictures at all. Nothing but books and books and books, bound in yellowy leather. Books from ceiling to floor, shelves of books between the windows and over the mantelpiece—hundreds and thousands of books. Even Edred's spirit sank. "It's no go. It will take us years to look in them all," he said.

"We may as well look at some of them," said Elfrida, always less daring, but more persevering, than her brother. She sat down on the worn carpet and began to read the names on the backs of the books nearest to her. Time passed by. The

"THEY RIFLED ITS MUSIC ITS PAGES WITH QUICK ARDENT HANDS."

sunlight that came through the blinds had quite changed its place on the carpet, and still Elfrida persevered. Edred grew more and more restless.

But Elfrida plodded on, though her head and her back both ached. I wish I could say that her perseverance was rewarded. But it wasn't, and one must keep to facts. As it happened, it was Edred who, aimlessly

running his finger along the edge of the bookshelf just for the pleasure of looking at the soft, mouse-coloured dust that clung to the finger at the end of each shelf, suddenly cried out, "What about this?" and pulled out a great white book that had on its cover a shield printed in gold with squares and little spots on it, and a gold pig standing on the top of the shield, and on the back, "The History of the Arden Family."

In an instant it was open on the floor between them, and they were turning its pages with quick, anxious hands. But, alas! it was as empty of spells as dull old Burgess himself.

It was only when Edred shut it with a bang and the remark that he had had jolly well enough of it that a paper fluttered out and swept away like a pigeon, settling on the fireless hearth. And it was the spell. There was no doubt of that.

Written in faint ink on a square yellowed sheet of letter-paper that had been folded once, and opened and folded again so often that the fold was worn thin and hardly held its two parts together, the writing was fine and pointed and ladylike. At the top was written: "The Spell Aunt Anne Told Me—December 24, 1793."

And then came the spell:—

Hear, Oh badge of Arden's house
The spell my little age allows;
Arden speaks it without fear,
Badge of Arden's house, draw near
Make me brave and make me wise,
And show me where the treasure lies.

"To be said," the paper went on, "at sun setting by a Lord Arden between the completion of his ninth and tenth years. But it is all folly and not to be believed."

"This is it, right enough," said Edred. "Come on, let's get out of this." They turned to go, and as they did so something moved in the corner of the library—something little, and they could not see its shape.

"Oh," said Elfrida, then, "I am so glad it's not at midnight you've got to say the spell. You'd be too frightened!"

"I shouldn't," said Edred, very pale and walking quickly away from the castle. "I should say it just the same if it was midnight." And he very nearly believed what he said.

Elfrida it was who had picked up the paper that Edred had dropped when that thing moved in the corner. She still held it fast.

"I expect it was only a rat or something," said Edred, his heart beating nineteen to the dozen, as they say in Kent and elsewhere.

"Oh, yes," said Elfrida, whose lips were trembling a little; "I'm sure it was only a rat or something."

When they got to the top of Arden Knoll there was no sign of sunset. There was time, therefore, to pull oneself together, to listen to the skylarks, and to smell the bean flowers, and to wonder how one could have been such a duffer as to be scared by a "rat or something."

The children had not spoken for several minutes. Their four eyes were fixed on the sun, and as the edge of it seemed to flatten itself against the hill shoulder Elfrida whispered, "Now!" and gave her brother the paper.

They had read the spell so often, as they sat there in the waning light, that both knew it by heart, so there was no need for Edred to read it. And that was lucky, for in that thick, pink light the faint ink hardly showed at all on the yellowy paper.

Edred stood up.

"Now!" said Elfrida, again. "Say it now." And Edred said, quite out loud and in a pleasant sort of sing-song, such as he was accustomed to use at school when reciting the stirring ballads of the late Lord Macaulay, or the moving tale of the boy on the burning deck:—

Hear, Oh badge of Arden's house,
The spell my little age allows;
Arden speaks it without fear,
Badge of Arden's house, draw near
Make me brave and make me wise,
And show me where the treasure lies.

"Where the treasure lies," he ended, and the great silence of the downs seemed to rush in like a wave to fill the space which his voice had filled.

And nothing else happened at all. A flush of pink from the sun setting spread over the downs, the grass stems showed up thin and distinct, the skylarks had ceased to sing, but the scent of the bean-flowers and the sea weed was stronger than ever. And nothing happened till Edred cried out, "What's that?" For close to his foot something moved, not quickly or suddenly so as to startle, but very gently, very quietly, very unmistakably—something that glittered goldenly in the pink diffused light of the sun setting.

"Why," said Elfrida, stooping, "why, it's——"

(To be continued.)

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CHAPTER II.

THE MOULDIWARP.

AND it was. It was the living image of the little, pig-like animal that was stamped in gold above the chequered shield on the cover of the white book in which they had found the spell. And as on the yellowy white of the vellum book cover, so here on the thymy grass of the knoll, it shone golden. The children stood perfectly still. They were afraid to move lest they should scare away this little creature which, though golden, was alive and moved about at their feet, turning a restless nose to right and left.

"It *is*," said Elfrida again, very softly, so as not to frighten it.

"*What?*" Edred asked, though he knew well enough.

"Off the book that we got the spell out of."

"That was our crest on top of our coat-of-arms, like on the old snuff-box that was great-grandpapa's."

"This is our crest come alive, that's all."

"Well," said Edred, "it's very tame. I will say that."

"Well——" Elfrida was beginning; but at that same moment the mole also, suddenly and astonishingly, said, "Well?"

There was a hushed pause. Then —

"Did *you* say that?" Elfrida whispered.

"No," said Edred, "*you* did."

"Don't whisper, now," said the mole, "'tain't purty manners, so I tells 'ee."

With one accord the two children came to their knees, one on each side of the white mole.

"I *say!*" said Edred.

"Now, don't," said the mole, pointing its nose at him quite as disdainfully as any human being could have pointed a finger. "Don't you go for to purtend you don't know as Mouldiwarps 'as got tongues in dere heads same's what you've got."

"But not to talk with?" said Elfrida, softly.

"Don't you tell me," said the Mouldiwarp, bristling a little. "Hasn't no one told you e'er a fairy tale? All us beasts has tongues, and when we're dere us uses of en."

"When you're where?" said Edred, rather annoyed at being forced to believe in fairy tales, which he had never really liked.

"Why, in a fairy-tale for sure," said the mole. "Wherever to goodness else on earth do you suppose you be?"

"We're here," said Edred, kicking the ground to make it feel more solid and himself more sure of things, "on Arden Knoll."

"An' ain't that in a fairy tale?" demanded the Mouldiwarp, triumphantly. "You do talk so free, you do. You called me, and here I be. What d'you want?"

"Are you," said Elfrida, thrilling with surprise and fear, and pleasure and hope, and

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wonder, and a few other things which, taken in the lump, are usually called "a thousand conflicting emotions"—"are you the 'badge of Arden's house'?"

"Course I be," said the mole—"what's left of it; and never did I think he be called one by the Arden boy and gell as didn't know their own silly minds. What do you want, eh?"

"You might tell us where the treasure is," said Edred.

"That comes last, greedy," said the mole. "I've got to make you good and wise first, and I see I've got my work cut out. Good night."

It began to move away.

"Oh, *don't* go," said Elfrida. "We shall never find you again. Oh, don't! Oh, this is dreadful!"

The mole paused.

"I've *got* to let you find me again. Don't upset yourself," it said, bitterly. "When you wants me, come up on to the knoll and say a piece of poetry to call me, and I'll come," and it started again.

"But what poetry?" Edred asked.

"Oh, anything. You can pick and choose." Edred thought of "The Lays of Ancient Rome."

"Only 'ain't no good without you makes it up yourselves," said the Mouldiwarp.

"Oh!" said the two, much disheartened.

"And course it must be askin' me to kindly come to you. Get along home."

The two children turned towards the lights of Ardenhurst Station in perfect silence. By the time they reached the house with the green balconies and the smooth, pale, polished door-knocker they had decided, as children almost always do in cases of magic adventure, that they had better not say anything to any one.

Aunt Edith came home as they were washing their hands and faces. She brought with her presents for Edred's birthday—nicer presents and more of them, than he had had for three years.

"I've got something for Elfrida too," said Aunt Edith.

It was a book—a red book with gold pictures on back and cover—and it was called "The Amulet."

"And now to supper," said Aunt Edith. "Roast chicken. And gooseberry pie. And cream."

To the children, accustomed to the mild unmitigatedness of bread and milk for supper, this seemed the crowning wonder of the day. And what a day it had been!

And while they ate the aunt told them of her day.

"It really *is* a ship," she said, "and the best thing it brings is that we shan't let lodgings any more."

"Hurrah!" was the natural response.

"And we shall have more money to spend and be more comfortable. And you can go to a really nice school. And where do you think we're going to live?"

"Not," said Elfrida, in a whisper, "not at the castle?"

"Why, how did you guess?"

Elfrida looked at Edred. He hastily swallowed a large mouthful of chicken to say, "Auntie, I do hope you won't mind. We went to Arden to-day. You said we might go this year."

Then the whole story came out—yes, quite all, up to the saying of the spell.

Aunt Edith laughed, and Edred said quickly:—

"That's all the story, auntie. And I *am* Lord Arden, aren't I?"

"Yes," the aunt answered, gravely. "You are Lord Arden."

"Oh, ripping!" cried Edred, with so joyous a face that his aunt put away a little sermon she had got ready in the tram on the duties of the English aristocracy—that would keep, she thought.

"How would you like," asked the aunt, "to go over and live at the castle *now*?"

"To-night?"

"No, no," she laughed; "next week. You see, I must try to let this house, and I shall be very busy. Mrs. Hunniseth, the old lady who used to keep house for your great-uncle, wrote to the lawyers and asked if we would employ her. I remember her when I was a little girl; she is a dear, and knows heaps of old stories. How would you like to be there with her while I finish up here and get rid of the lodgers?"

So that was how it was arranged. The aunt stared at the bow-windowed house to arrange the new furniture—for the house was to be let furnished—and to pack up the beautiful old things that were real Arden things, and the children went in the carrier's cart, with their clothes and their toys in two black boxes, and in their hearts what is called "a world of joyous anticipations."

Mrs. Hunniseth received them with a prim old-fashioned curtsy which melted into an embrace.

"You're welcome to your home, my lord," she said, with her arm round each child, "and you too, miss, my dear. Anyone can see

"THE CHILDREN WENT IN THE CARRIER'S CART"

you're Ardens, both two of you There was always a boy and a girl—a boy and a girl" She had a sweet, patient face, with large, pale blue eyes that twinkled when she smiled, and she almost always smiled when she looked at the children.

The house was much bigger than they had found it on that wonderful first day when they had acted the part of burglars There was a door covered with faded green baize Mrs. Honeysett pointed it out to them with, "Don't you think this is all: there's the other house beyond", and at the other side of that door there was, indeed, the other house.

The house they had already seen was neat, orderly, "bees whacked," as Mrs. Honeysett said, till every bit of furniture shone like a mirror or a fond hope But beyond the baize door there were shadows, there was dust, and windows draped in cobwebs, before which hung curtains tattered and faded.

The carpets lay in rags on the floors, on the furniture the dust lay thick, and on the boards of corridor and staircase; on the four post beds in the bed chambers the hangings hung dusty and musty—the quilts showed the holes eaten by moths and mice From the great kitchen-hearth, where no fire had been this very long time, yet where still the ashes of the last fire lay grey and white, a chill air came The place smelt damp and felt uncanny

When they had opened every door and looked at every roomful of decayed splendour they went out and round Then they saw that this was a wing built right out of the castle—a wing with squarish windows, with carved drip stones All the windows were yellow as parchment, with the inner veil laid on them by Time and the spider. The ivy grew thick round the windows, almost hiding some of them altogether

"Oh!" cried Elfrida, throwing herself down on the turf, "it's too good to be true I can't believe it"

"What *I* can't believe," said Edred, doing likewise, "is that precious mole"

"But we saw it," said Elfrida, "you can't help believing things when you've seen them Have you made up any poetry to call the mole with?"

"I've tried. And I've done it."

"Oh, Edred, you *are* clever. Do say it."

Edred slowly said it —

> "Mole, mole,
> Come out of your hole,
> I know you're blind,
> But I don't mind"

Elfrida looked eagerly round her. There was the short turf, the castle walls, ivied and grey, rose high above her, pigeons circled overhead, but there was no mole—not a hint or dream or idea of a mole

"Edred," said his sister

"Well?"

"Did you *really* make that up? Don't be cross, but I do think I've heard something like it before"

"I—I adopted it," said Edred.

ELFRIDA BURIED HER HEAD IN HER HANDS AND THOUGHT TILL HER FOREHEAD FELT AS LARGE AS A MANGEL WURZEL.

"Eh?" said Elfrida.

"Haven't you seen it in books, 'Adopted from the French'? I altered it."

"I don't believe that'll do. How much did you alter? What's the real poetry like?"

"The mole, the mole,
He lives in a hole
The mole is blind,
I don't mind,'

said Edred, sulkily. "Auntie told me it the day you went to tea with Mrs. Harrison."

"I'm sure you ought to make it up all yourself. You see, the mole doesn't come.'

"There isn't any mole," said Edred.

"Let's both think hard. I'm sure I could make poetry—if I knew how to begin."

Elfrida buried her head in her hands and thought till her forehead felt as large as a mangel wurzel and her blood throbbed in it like a church clock ticking.

"Will this do?" she said at last, lifting her head from her hands and her elbows from the grass; there were deep dents and lines on her elbows made by the grass stalks she had been lying on so long.

'Spin it out,' said Edred.

Thus encouraged, Elfrida said, very slowly and carefully: "Oh Mouldwarp! I think it would rather be called that than mole, don't you?—'Oh, Mouldwarp, do please come out and show us how to set about it'—that means the treasure. I hope it'll understand.'

"That's not poetry," said Edred.

"Yes, it is, if you say it right on

Oh, Mouldwarp, do please come out
And show us how to set about
It.'

"There ought to be some more,' said Edred—rather impressed, all the same.

"There is," said Elfrida. "Oh, wait a minute—I shall remember directly. It—what I mean is, how to find the treasure and make Edred brave and wise and kind.'

'There wasn't anything about kind. I'm kind enough if it comes to that,' said Lord Arden.

"Oh, I *know* you are, but poetry has to rhyme—you know it has. I expect poets often have to say what they don't mean because of that."

"Well, say it straight through," said Edred, and Elfrida said, obediently:—

"Oh, Mouldwarp, do please come out,
And show us how to set about
It. What I mean is how to find
The treasure, and make Edred brave and wise
and kind.

I'll write it down if you've got a pencil."

Edred produced a piece of red chalk, but he had no paper, so Elfrida had to stretch out her white petticoat, put a big stone on the hem, and hold it out tightly with both hands, while Edred wrote at her dictation.

Then Edred studiously repeated the lines again and again, as he was accustomed to repeat "The Battle of Ivry," till at last he was able to stand up and say:—

"Oh, Mouldwarp, do please come out,
And show me how to set about
It. What I mean is how to find
The treasure, and make Edred brave and wise
and kind.

If you don't mind," he added.

And instantly there was the white mole.

'What do you want now?' it said very crossly indeed. 'And call that poetry!'

"It's the first I ever made," said Elfrida of the hot ears. "Perhaps it'll be better next time."

"We want you to do what the spell says," said Edred.

"Make *you* brave and wise? That can't be done all in a minute. That's a long job, that is," said the mole, viciously.

"Don't be so cross, dear," said Elfrida, "and if it's going to be so long hadn't you better begin?"

"I ain't agoin' to do no more'n my share," said the mole, somewhat softened though, perhaps by the "dear." "You tell me what you want, and p'r'aps I'll do it."

"I know what I want," said Edred, "but I don't know whether you *can* do it."

"Ha!" laughed the mole, contemptuously.

"I got it out of a book Elfrida got on my birthday," Edred said. "The children in it went into the past. I'd like to go into the past—and find that treasure!"

"Choose your period," said the mole, wearily.

"Choose——?"

"Your period. What time you'd like to go back to. If you don't choose before I've counted ten it's all off. One, two, three, four——"

It counted ten through a blank silence.

"Nine, ten," it ended. "Oh, very well, den, you'll have to take your luck, that's all."

"Bother!" said Edred. "I couldn't think of anything except all the dates of all the Kings of England all at once."

"Lucky to know 'em," said the mole, and so plainly not believing that he did know them that Edred found himself saying under his breath: "William the First, 1066; William the Second, 1087; Henry the First, 1100."

The mole yawned, which, of course, was very rude of it.

"Don't be cross, dear," said Elfrida, again; "you help us your own way."

"Now you're talking," said the mole, which, of course, Elfrida knew. "Well, I'll tell ee what. Don't you be nasty to each other for a whole day, and den——"

"*You* needn't talk," said Edred, still under his breath.

"Very well," said the mole, whose ears were sharper than his eyes. "I won't."

"Oh, don't," sighed Elfrida, "*what* is it we are to do when we've been nice to each other for a whole day?"

"Well, *when* you've done dat," said the mole, "look for the door."

"What door?" asked Elfrida.

"*The* door," said the mole.

"But where is it?" Edred asked.

"In the house it be, of course," said the mole. "Where else to gracious should it be?"

And it ran with mouse-like quickness across the grass and vanished down what looked like a rabbit-hole.

"Now," said Elfrida, triumphantly, "you've got to believe in the mole."

"Yes," said Edred, "and you've got to be nice to me for a whole day, or it's no use my believing."

"Aren't I generally nice?" the girl pleaded, and her lips trembled.

"Yes," said her brother. "Yes, Lady Arden; and now I'm going to be nice, too. And where shall we look for the door?"

This problem occupied them till tea-time. After tea they decided to paint—with the new paint box and the beautiful new brushes. Elfrida wanted to paint Mr. Millar's illustrations in "The Amulet," and Edred wanted to paint them, too. This could not be, as you will see if you have the book. Edred contended that they were his paints. Elfrida reminded him that it was her book. The heated discussion that followed ended quite suddenly and breathlessly.

"*I* wouldn't be a selfish pig," said Edred.

"No more would I," said Elfrida. "Oh, Edred, *is* this being nice to each other for twenty-four hours?"

"Oh," said Edred. "Yes—well—all right. Never mind. We'll begin again to-morrow."

But it is much more difficult than you would think to be really nice to your brother or sister for a whole day. Three days passed before the two Ardens could succeed in this seemingly so simple thing. The days were not dull ones at all. There were beautiful things in them that I wish I had time to tell you about—such as climbings and discoveries and books with pictures, and a bureau with a secret drawer. It had nothing in it but a farthing and a bit of red tape—secret drawers never have—but it was a very nice secret drawer for all that.

And at last a day came when each held its temper with a strong bit. They began by being very polite to each other, and presently it grew to seem like a game.

"Let's call each other Lord and Lady Arden all the time and pretend that we're no relation," said Elfrida. And really that helped tremendously. It is wonderful how much more polite you can be to outsiders than you can to your relations, who are, when all's said and done, the people you really love.

As the time went on they grew more and more careful It was like building a house of cards As hour after hour of blameless politeness was added to the score, they grew almost breathlessly anxious If, after all this, some natural annoyance should spoil everything!

"I do hope," said Edred, towards tea-time, "that you won't go and do anything tire some"

"Oh, dear, I do hope I sha'n't," said Elfrida.

And this was just like them both

After tea they decided to read so as to lessen the chances of failure. They both wanted the same book—"Treasure Island" it was—and for a moment the niceness of both hung in the balance. Then, with one accord, each said, "No—you have it" and the matter ended in each taking a quite different book that it didn't particularly want to read.

At bed-time Edred lighted Elfrida's candle for her, and she picked up the matches for him when he dropped them

"Bless their hearts," said Mrs Honeysett, in the passage

They parted with the heartfelt remark, "We've done it this time!

Now, of course, in the three days when they had not succeeded in being nice to each other they had "looked for the door," but as the mole had not said where it was, nor what kind of a door, their search had not been fruitful. Most of the rooms had several doors, and as there were a good many rooms the doors numbered fifty-seven, counting cupboards And among these there was none that seemed worthy to rank above all others as *the* door Many of the doors in the old part of the house looked as though they might be *the* one, but since there *were* many no one could be sure

"How shall we know?" Edred asked, next morning, through his egg and toast

"I suppose it's like when people fall in love," said Elfrida, through hers "You see the door and you know at once that it is the only princess in the world for you—I mean door, of course," she added

And then, when breakfast was over, they stood up and looked at each other

"Now," they said together

"We'll look at every single door Perhaps there'll be magic writing on *the* door some-where in the night like mushrooms" said the girl

"More likely that mole was kidding us," said the boy

"Oh no," said the girl "and we must look at them on both sides—every one. Oh, I do wonder what's inside the door, don't you?"

"Bluebeard's wives, I shouldn't wonder," said the boy, "with their heads ——"

"If you don't stop," said the girl, putting her fingers in her ears, "I won't look for the door at all No, I don't mean to be aggravating, but please don't You know I hate it."

"Come on," said Edred; "and don't be a duffer, old chap"

The proudest moments of Elfrida's life were when her brother called her "old chap."

So they went and looked at all the fifty-seven doors, one after the other, on the inside and on the outside; some were painted and some were grained, some were carved and some were plain, some had panels and others had none, but they were all of them doors—just doors and nothing more. Each was just a door, and none of them had any claim at all to be spoken of as THE door And when they had looked at all the fifty-seven on the inside and on the outside, there was nothing for it but to look again. So they looked again, very carefully, to see if there were any magic writing that they hadn't happened to notice. And there wasn't. So then they began to tap the walls to try and discover a door with a secret spring And that was no good either.

"There isn't any old door," said Edred "I told you that mole was pulling our leg"

"I'm *sure* there is," said Elfrida, sniffing a little from prolonged anxiety. "Look here—let's play it like the willing game I'll be blindfolded, and you hold my hand and will me to find the door"

"I don't believe in the willing game," said Edred, disagreeably

"No more do I," said Elfrida; "but we must do something you know It's no good sitting down and saying there isn't any door"

"There isn't, all the same," said Edred "Well—come on"

So Elfrida was blindfolded with her best silk scarf the blue one with the hem stitched ends—and Edred took her hands And at once this happened in the library, where they had found the spell—Elfrida began to walk, in a steady and purposeful way She crossed the hall and went through the door into the other house, went along its corridor and up its dusty stairs—up, and up, and up——

"We've looked everywhere here," said Edred But Elfrida did not stop for that

"I know I'm going straight to it," she said. "Oh, do try to believe a little, or we shall never find anything," and went on along the corridor, where the spiders had draped the picture-frames with their grey crape curtains. There were many doors in this corridor, and Elfrida stopped suddenly at one of them—a door just like the others.

"This," she said, putting her hand out till it rested on the panel, all spread out like a pink starfish—"this is the door."

She felt for the handle, turned it, and went in, still pulling at Edred's hand and with the blue scarf still on her eyes. Edred followed.

"I say!" he said, and then she pulled off the scarf.

The door closed itself very softly behind them.

They were in a long attic room close under the roof—a room that they had certainly, in all their explorings, never found before. There were no windows—the roof sloped down at the sides almost to the floor. There was no ceiling—old worm-eaten roof-beams showed the tiles between—and old tie-beams crossed it so that as you stared up it looked like a great ladder with the rungs very far apart. Here and there through the chinks of the tiles a golden dusty light filtered in, and outside was the "tick, tick" of moving pigeon feet, the rustling of pigeon feathers, the "cooroocoo" of pigeon voices. The long room was almost bare; only along each side, close under the roof, was a row of chests, and no two chests were alike.

"Oh!" said Edred. "I'm good and wise now. I feel it inside me. So now we've got the treasure. We'll rebuild the castle."

He got to the nearest chest and pushed at the lid, but Elfrida had to push too before he could get the heavy thing up. And when it was up—alas! there was no treasure in the chest—only folded clothes.

So then they tried the next chest.

"THIS IS THE DOOR."

And in all the chests there was no treasure at all—only clothes. Clothes, and more clothes again.

"Well, never mind," said Elfrida, trying to speak comfortingly. "They'll be splendid for dressing up in."

"That's all very well," said Edred, "but I want the treasure."

"Perhaps," said Elfrida, with some want of tact, "perhaps you're not 'good and wise' yet. Not *quite*, I mean," she hastened to add. "Let's take the things out and look at them. Perhaps the treasure's in the pockets."

But it wasn't—not a bit of it, not even a threepenny bit.

The clothes in the first chest were full riding cloaks and long boots, short-waisted dresses and embroidered scarves, tight breeches and coats with bright buttons. There were very interesting waistcoats and odd-shaped hats. One, a little green one, looked as though it would fit Edred. He tried it on. And at the same minute Elfrida lifted out a little straw bonnet trimmed with blue ribbons. "Here's one for me," she said, and put it on.

And then it seemed as though the cooing and rustling of the pigeons came right through the roof and crowded round them in a sort of dazzlement and cloud of pigeon-noises. The pigeon-noises came closer and closer, and garments were drawn out of the chest and put on the children. They did not know how it was done, but presently there the two children stood in clothing such as they had never worn. Elfrida had a short-waisted dress of green sprigged cotton, with a long and skimpy skirt. Her square-toed brown shoes were gone, and her feet wore flimsy sandals. Her arms were bare, and a muslin handkerchief was folded across her chest. Edred wore very white trousers that came right up under his arms, a blue coat with brass buttons, and a sort of frilly tucker round his neck.

"I say!" they both said, when the pigeon noises had taken themselves away, and they were face to face in the long, empty room.

"That was funny," Edred added. "Let's go down and show Mrs. Honeysett."

The children ran down the passage to the parlour and burst open the door.

There sat a very upright old lady and a very upright old gentleman, and their clothes were not the clothes people wear nowadays. They were like the clothes the children themselves had on. The old lady was sewing a fine white frill, the old gentleman was reading what looked like a page from some newspaper.

"You will commit to memory the whole of the one commencing 'Happy the child whose youngest years receive instruction well.' And you will be deprived of pudding with your dinners," remarked the old lady.

"I say!" murmured Edred.

"Oh, *hush!*" said Elfrida, as the old lady carried her cambric frills to the window seat.

"But I won't stand it," whispered Edred. "I'll tell Aunt Edith—and who's *she*, any how?"

He glowered at the old lady across the speckless carpet.

"Oh, don't you *understand?*" Elfrida

"IF YOU PLEASE," SAID THE OLD LADY VERY SEVERELY, "WE FORGET OUR MANNERS, I THINK"

"Hoity-toity," said the old lady, very severely, "we forget our manners, I think. Make your curtsy, miss."

Elfrida made one as well as she could.

"To teach you respect for your elders," said the old gentleman, "you had best get by heart one of Dr. Watts's Divine and Moral Songs. I leave you to see to it, my lady."

He laid down the sheet and went out, very straight and dignified, and without quite knowing how it happened the children found themselves sitting on two little stools in a room that was and was not the parlour in which they had had that hopeful egg-and-bacon fast, each holding a marbled side of Dr. Watts's Hymns.

whispered back. "We've got turned into somebody else, and she's our grandmamma."

I don't know how it was that Elfrida saw this and Edred didn't. Perhaps because she was a girl, perhaps because she was two years older than he.

"Edred," said the old lady, "hand me the paper."

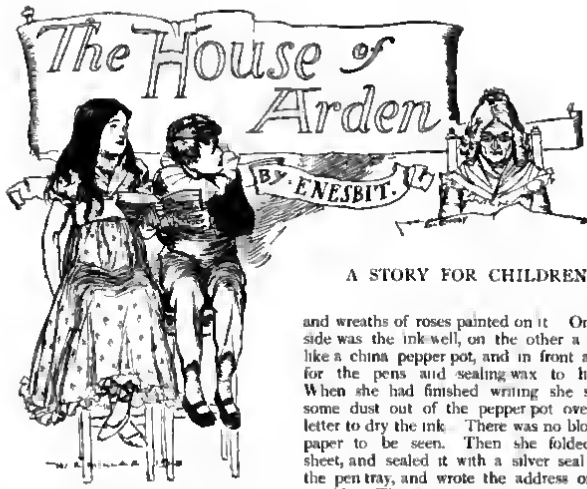
She pointed at the sheet on the brightly polished table. He got up and carried it across to her, and as he did so he glanced at it and saw—

THE TIMES

June 10, 1807.

And then he knew as well as Elfrida did, exactly where he was and *when*.

(To be continued.)



A STORY FOR CHILDREN.

CHAPTER III

IN BONEY'S TIMES

EDRED crept back to his stool and took his corner of the marble-backed book of Dr Watts, with fingers that trembled. If you are inclined to despise him, consider that it was his first real adventure.

"I say," Edred whispered, "we've got back to 1807. That paper says so."

"I know," Elfrida whispered back. "I wish I could remember what was happening in history in 1807," she continued, "but we never get past Edward IV."

Then the stiff old lady looked up over very large spectacles with thick silver rims, and said —

"Silence!"

Presently she laid down the *Times* and got ink and paper—no envelopes—and began to write. She was finishing a letter—the large sheet was almost covered on one side. When she had covered it quite, she turned it round and began to write across it. She used a white goose quill pen. The inkstand was of china, with gold scrolls and cupids and wreaths of roses painted on it. On one side was the ink-well, on the other a thing like a china pepper pot, and in front a tray for the pens and sealing-wax to lie in. When she had finished writing she shook some dust out of the pepper pot over the letter to dry the ink. There was no blotting paper to be seen. Then she folded the sheet, and sealed it with a silver seal from the pen tray, and wrote the address on the outside. Then —

"Have you got your task?" she asked.

"Yes, ma'am," said Elfrida, and this was taken to mean that she knew her task.

"Then come and say it."

So then first Elfrida and then Edred recited the melancholy verses.

"Now," said the old lady, "you may go and play in the garden."

"Mayn't we take your letter to the post?" Elfrida asked.

"Yes, but you are not to stay in the George bar, mind, not even if Mrs Skinner should invite you. Just hand her the letter and come out. Shut the door softly, and do not shuffle with your feet."

"Yes, ma'am," said Elfrida, and on that they got out.

"They'll find us out, bound to," said Edred, "we don't know a single thing about anything. I don't know where the George is, or where to get a stamp, or any thing. Let's go to the attic and try and get back into our own time. I expect we just got into the wrong door, don't you? Do you remember which door it was—the attic, I mean?" Edred suddenly asked. "Was it the third on the left?"

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"I don't know. But we can easily find it when we want it."

They raced up the stairs to the corridor where the prints were.

"It's not the first door, I'm certain," said Edred, so they opened the second. But it was not that either. So then they tried all the doors in turn, even opening, at last, the first one of all. And it was not that, even. *It was not any of them.*

"Fifty-five, fifty-six, fifty-seven," said Elfrida, and ended in a sob—"the door's gone! We shall have to stay here for ever and ever. Oh, I want auntie—I do, I do."

She sat down abruptly on a small green mat in front of the last door, which happened to be that of the kitchen.

Edred says he did not cry too. And if what he says is true, Elfrida's crying must have been louder than was usual with her; for the kitchen door opened, and the two children were caught up in two fat arms and hurried into a pleasant kitchen, where bright brass and copper pots hung on the walls, and between a large fire and a large meat-screen a leg of mutton turned round and round with nobody to help it.

"Hold your noise," said the owner of the fat arms, who now proved to be a very stout woman in a chocolate-coloured print gown sprigged with blue roses. She had a large linen apron and a cap with flappy frills, and between the frills just such another good, kind, jolly face as Mrs. Honeysett's own. "Here, stop your mouths," she said, "or your granny'll be after you—to say nothing of Boney. Stop your crying, do, and see what cookie's got for you."

She opened a tin canister and picked out two lumps of brown stuff that looked like sand—about the size and shape of prunes they were.

"What's that?" Edred asked.

"Drabbit me," said the cook, "what a child it is! Not know sugar when he sees it. Well, well, Master Edred, what next, I should like to know?"

"We've got to take granny's letter to post," said Edred, "and we don't——"

"Cook,' said Elfrida, on a sudden impulse, "can you keep a secret?"

"Can't I?" said the cook. "Haven't I kept the secret of how furmety's made and Bakewell pies and all? There's no furmety to hold a candle to mine in this country, as well you know."

"We don't know *anything*," said Elfrida; "that's just it. And we daren't let granny know how much we don't know. Some thing's happened to us, so that we can't remember anything that happened more than an hour ago."

"You're not deceiving poor cookie, are you now, like you did about the French soldiers being hid in the windmill, upsetting all the village like you did?"

"No; it's true—it's dreadfully true. You'll have to help us. We don't remember *anything*, either of us."

The cook sat down heavily in a polished arm chair with a patchwork cushion.

"She's overlooked you. There's not a doubt about it. You're bewitched. Oh, my pretty little dears, that ever I should see the day——"

The cook's fat, jolly face twisted and puckered in a way with which each child was familiar in the face of the other.

"Don't cry," they said, both together; and Elfrida added, "Who's overlooked what?"

"Old Betty Lovell has—that I'll be bound! She's bewitched you both, sure as eggs is eggs. I knew there'd be some sort of a to-do when my lord had her put in the stocks for stealing sticks in the wood. We've got to get her to take it off, my dears, that's what we've got to do, for sure, without you could find a white Mouldiwarp, and that's not likely."

"A white Mouldiwarp?" said both the children, and again they spoke together like a chorus, and looked at each other like conspirators.

"You know the rhyme—oh! but if you've forgotten everything you've forgotten that too."

"Say it, won't you?" said Edred.

"Let's see, how do it go?

> White Mouldiwarp a spell can make,
> White Mouldiwarp a spell can break;
> When all be well let Mouldiwarp be,
> When all goes ill, then turn to he."

"Well, all's not gone ill yet," said Elfrida. "Let's go and see the witch."

"You'd best take her something—a screw of sugar she'd like, and a pinch of tea."

"Why, she'd not say 'Thank you' for it," said Edred, looking at the tiny packets.

"I expect you've forgotten," said cook, gently, "that tea's ten shillings a pound, and sugar's gone up to three-and-six since the war."

"What war?"

"The French war. You haven't forgotten we're at war with Boney and the French, and the bonfire we had up at the church when the news came of the drubbing we gave them

at Trafalgar, and poor dear Lord Nelson and all? And your grandfather reading out about it to them from the George balcony, and all the people waiting to cheer, and him not able to get it out for choking pride and because of Lord Nelson—God bless him!"

"How splendid!" said Elfrida, "but we don't remember it."

"Nor you don't remember how you killed all the white butterflies last year because you said they were Frenchies in their white coats? And the birching you got for cruelty to dumb animals, his lordship said You howled for an hour together after it, so you did"

"I'm glad we've forgotten *that*, anyhow," said Edred.

"Gracious!" said the cook "Half after eleven, and my eggs not so much as broke for my pudding. Off you go with your letter Don't you tell anyone else about you forgetting And then you come home along by Dering's Spinney—and go see old Betty. Speak pretty to her and give her the tea and sugar, and keep your feet crossed under your chair if she asks you to sit down."

So the children went.

They found the George half way up Arden village, and gave their letter to a lady in a pleasant room, where there were rows of bright pewter pots and pewter plates on a brown dresser They hurried away the moment they had given the letter A coach top heavy with luggage had drawn up in front of the porch, and as they went out they saw the ostlers leading away the six smoking horses.

"How ever many horses have you got?" said Elfrida, addressing a man who had not joined in the kindly chorus of "Hallos, little 'uns!" that greeted the children So she judged him to be a new comer As he was.

"Two-and fifty," said the man

"What for?" Elfrida asked.

"Why, for the coaches, and the post shays, and the King's messengers, for sure," the man answered "How else'd we all get about the country, if it wasn't for the George stables?"

And then the children remembered that this was the time before railways and telegrams and telephones.

But they had to find the witch, and in a dreadful tumble down cottage, with big holes in its roof of rotten thatch, they did find her, in front of the fire, with a hen on her lap.

As soon as Edred caught sight of her through the crooked doorway, he stopped. "I'm not going in," he said, "what's the good? We know jolly well she *hasn't* bewitched us. And if we go cheeking her she *may*, and then we shall be in a nice hole."

"I'VE BROUGHT YOU SOME TEA AND SUGAR," SHE SAID.

So Elfrida went into the cottage alone, and said "Good morning" in rather a frightened way.

"I've brought you some tea and sugar," she said.

"What for? I've not done you no 'arm"

"No," said Elfrida. "I'm sure you wouldn't"

"Then what have you brought it for?"

"For—oh, just for you," said Elfrida. "I thought you'd like it. It's just a—a love gift, you know."

"A love gift?" said the old woman, slowly "After all this long time?"

Elfrida did not understand. How should she? It's almost impossible for even the most grown up and clever of us to know how women used to be treated—and not so very long ago either—if they were once suspected of being

witches So Elfrida, not understanding, said, "Yes, is your fowl ill?"

"'Twill mend," said the old woman, "'twill mend The healing of my hands has gone into it" She rose, set the hen on the hearth, where it fluttered, squawked, and settled among grey ashes, very much annoying the black cat, and laid her hands suddenly on Elfrida's shoulders

"And now the healing of my hands is for you," she said "You have brought me a love-gift Never a gift have I had these fifty years but was a gift of fear or a payment for help—to buy me to take off a spell or put a spell on But you have brought me a love gift, and I tell you you shall have your heart's desire You shall have love around and about you all your life long That which is lost shall be found That which came not shall come again In this world's goods you shall be blessed, and blessed in the goods of the heart also I know—I see—and for you I see everything good and fair Your future shall be clean and sweet as your kind heart."

She took her hands away. Elfrida, very much impressed, stood still, not knowing what to say or do, she rather wanted to cry.

The old woman sank down in a crouching heap, and her voice changed to one of singsong

"I know," she said—"I know many things. All alone the livelong day and the death-long night, I have learned to see. As cats see through the dark, I see through the days that have been and shall be I know that you are not here, that you are not now You will return whence you came, and this time that is not yours shall bear no trace of you. And my blessing shall be with you in your own time and your own place, because you brought a love gift to the poor old wise woman of Arden"

"Is there anything I can do for you?" Elfrida asked, very sorry indeed, for the old woman's voice was very pitiful.

"Kiss me,' said the old woman—"kiss me with your little child's mouth, that has come back a hundred years to do it."

Elfrida did not wish to kiss the wrinkled grey face, but her heart wished her to be kind, and she obeyed her heart

"Ah!" said the wise woman, "now I see. Oh, never have I had such a vision None of them all has ever been like this I see great globes of light like the sun in the streets of the city, where now are only little oil lamps and guttering lanterns. I see iron roads, with fiery dragons drawing the coaches, and rich and poor riding up and down on them Men shall speak in England and their voice be heard in France—more, the voices of men dead shall be kept alive in boxes and speak at the will of those who still live The handlooms shall cease in the cottages, and the weavers shall work in palaces with a thousand windows lighted as bright as day. The sun shall stoop to make men's portraits more like than any painter can make them There shall be ships that shall run under the seas like conger-eels, and ships that shall ride over the clouds like great birds. And bread that is now a shilling and ninepence shall be fivepence, and the corn and the beef shall come from overseas to feed us. And every child shall be taught who can learn, and——"

"Peace, prater," cried a stern voice in the doorway Elfrida turned There stood the grandfather, Lord Arden, very straight and tall and grey, leaning on his gold-headed cane, and beside him Edred, looking very small and found-out

The old witch did not seem to see them, her eyes, that rolled and blinked, saw nothing But she must have heard, for —

"Loss to Arden," she said, "loss and woe to Arden The hangings of your house shall be given to the spider, and the mice shall eat your carved furnishings. Your gold shall be less and less, and your house go down and down till there is not a field that is yours about your house"

Lord Arden shrugged his shoulders.

"Likely tales," he said, "to frighten babes with Tell me rather, if you would have me believe, what shall hap to-morrow"

"To-morrow," said the wise woman, "the French shall land in Lymchurch Bay"

Lord Arden laughed

"And I give you a sign—three signs," said the woman, faintly, for it is tiring work seeing into the future, even when you are enlightened by a kiss from someone who has been there. "You shall see the white Mouldwarp, that is the badge of Arden, on your threshold as you enter"

"That shall be one sign," said the old man, mockingly

"And the second" she said, "shall be again the badge of your house, in your own chair in your own parlour."

"That seems likely," said Lord Arden, sneering

"And the third," said she, "shall be the badge of your house in the arms of this child."

Lord Arden led Edred and Elfrida away, one in each hand, and as he went he was

very severe on disobedient children who went straying after wicked witches.

"Bread and water for dinner," he said, "to teach you better ways"

"Oh, grandfather," said Elfrida, catching at his hand, "don't be so unkind! Just think about when *you* were little I'm sure you liked looking at witches, didn't you, now?"

Lord Arden stared angnly at her, and then he chuckled. "It's a bold girl, so it is," he said "I own I remember well seeing a witch ducked no farther off than Newchurch, and playing truant from my tutor to see it, too."

"There now, you see," said Elfrida, coaxingly, "we don't mean to be naughty; we're just like what you were. You won't make it bread and water, will you?—especially if bread's so dear."

Lord Arden chuckled again.

"Why, the little white mouse has found a tongue, and never was I spoken to so bold since the days I wore petticoats myself," he said. "Well, well—we'll say no more about it this time."

So they turned across the summer fields to Arden Castle. And on the doorstep sat a white mole

"There, now!" said Elfrida. The mole vanished like a streak of white paint that is rubbed out.

"Pnoh!" said Lord Arden. "There's plenty of white moles in the world."

But when he saw the white mole sitting up in his own carved arm chair in the parlour, he owned that it was very unusual

And the Mouldwarp made a little run and a little jump, and Elfrida caught it and held it against her waist with both hands.

"Stay with me," whispered Elfrida to the mole.

"By George!" said Lord Arden to the universe.

"So now you see," said Edred to Lord Arden

Then they had dinner. The children had to sit very straight and eat very slowly, and their glasses were filled with beer instead of water; and when they asked for water Lady Arden asked how many more times they would have to be told that water was unwholesome Lord Arden was very quiet. At quite the beginning of dinner he had told his wife all about the wise woman, and the landing of the French, and the three signs.

"It's my belief," said Lady Arden, "that it's a direct warning—in return, perhaps, for the tea and sugar"

"Ah!" said Lord Arden. "Well, whether or no, every man in this village shall be armed and paraded this day, or I'll know the reason why I'm not going to have the French stepping ashore as cool as cucumbers, without 'With your leave' or 'By your leave,' and anyone to say afterwards, 'Well, Arden, you had fair warning, only you would know best."

"No," said Lady Arden; "that *would* be unpleasant."

Lord Arden's decision was made stronger by the arrival of a man on a very hot horse

"The French are coming," he said, quite out of breath

Lord Arden was so busy giving orders, and

my lady so busy talking his orders over with the maidservants, that the children were left free to use their eyes and ears. And they went down into the village and saw many strange things. They saw men at the grind stone sharpening old swords, and others who had no swords putting a fine edge on bill-hooks, hatchets, scythes, and kitchen choppers. They saw other men boarding up their windows and digging holes in their gardens and burying their money and their teaspoons in them. No one knew how the rumour had begun, but everyone believed it now.

Elfrida wished more than ever that she knew more about the later chapters of the history book. Did Boney land in England on the 17th of June, 1807? She could not remember. There was something, she knew, in the book about a French invasion, but she could not remember what it was an invasion of, nor when it took place. So she and Edred knew as little as anyone else what really *was* going to happen. The Mould-warp, in the hurried interview she had had with it before dinner, had promised to come if she called it—"with poetry, of course," it added, as it curled up in the corner of the drawer, and this comforted her a good deal when, going up to get her bonnet, she found the bottom drawer empty. So, though she was as interested as Edred in all that was going on, it was only with half her mind.

So for once Edred was more observant than she, and when he noticed that the men built a bonfire not at all on the spot which Lord Arden had pointed out as most convenient, he wondered why.

And presently, seeing a man going by that very spot, he asked him why. To his surprise, the man at once poked him in the ribs with a very hard finger, and said—

"Ah, you're a little wag, you are! But you're a little gentleman, too, and so's the little lady, bless her. You never gave us away to the Preventives—for all you found out."

"Of course," said Elfrida, cautiously. "We should never give anyone away."

"Want to come along down now?" the man asked. He was a brown-faced, sturdy, sailor-looking man, with a short pigtail sticking out from the back of his head like the china handle of a Japanese tea-pot.

"Oh, yes," said Elfrida, and Edred did not say "Oh, no!"

"Then just you wait till I'm ruf of sight, and then come down the way you see me go," said the man. And they obeyed.

Alas, too few children in these uninteresting times of ours have ever been in a smuggler's cave! To Edred and to Elfrida it was as great a novelty as it would be to you or to me.

When they came up with the brown man he was standing in the middle of a patch of furze.

"Jump they outside bushes," he said. And they jumped, and wound their way among the furze bushes by little narrow rabbit-paths till they stood by his side.

Then he lifted a great heap of furze and bramble that looked as if it had lived and died exactly where it was. And there was a hole—with steps going down.

It was dark below, but Elfrida did not hesitate to do as she was told and to go forward. And if Edred hesitated it was only for a minute.

The children went down some half-a-dozen steps. Then the brown man came into the hole too, and drew the furze after him. And he lighted a lantern; there was a tallow candle in it, and it smelt very nasty indeed.

There was the great cave—where barrels and bales were heaped, a sanded floor, a table and benches cut out of solid chalk, and an irregular opening partly blocked by a mass of fallen cliff, through which you saw the mysterious twilit sea, with stars coming out over it.

"Do you think the French *will* land to-morrow in Lymchurch Bay?" Edred asked.

By the light of the lantern the smuggler solemnly winked.

"You two can keep a secret, I know," he said. "The French won't land; it's us what'll land, and we'll land here and not in the bey, and what we'll land is a good drop of the real thing, and a yard or two of silk or lace maybe. I don't know who 'twas put it about as the French was a coming, but you may lay to it they aren't no friends of the Revenue."

"Oh, I see," said Elfrida. "And did——"

"The worst of it'll be the look-out they'll keep. Lucky for us it's all our men as has volunteered for duty. And we know our friends."

"But do you mean," said Edred, "that you can be friends with a Frenchman, when we're at war with them?"

"It's like this, little man," said the smuggler, sitting down on a keg that stood handily on its head ready for a seat. "We ain't no quarrel with the free trade men—neither here nor there. A man's got his living to get,

"'DO YOU THINK THE FRENCH WILL LAND TO-MORROW IN LYMCHURCH BAY?' EDRED ASKED."

Having seen all the ins and outs of the cave, the children were not sorry to get back to Arden Castle. They were put to bed by Lady Arden's own maid.

Only Elfrida woke once and found the room filled with red light, and, looking out of the window, saw that one of the beacon bonfires was alight and that the flames and smoke were streaming across the dark sky.

It was grey morning when they got up and dressed. No one was about in the house, but the front door was open.

They made their way down to the cliff, where a thick, black crowd stood—a crowd of armed men in their makeshift uniforms whom old Lord Arden had drilled and paraded the evening before. And they were all looking out to sea, where a ship was driving straight on to the rocks two hundred feet below.

"'Tis a French ship, by her rig," someone said.

"The first of the fleet—a scout," said another, "and Heaven has sent a storm to destroy them like it destroyed the accursed Armada in Queen Bess's time."

And still the ship came nearer.

"'Tis the *Bonne Esperance*,' said the low voice of the smuggler friend close to Elfrida's ear, and she could only just hear him through the whistling of the gale. "'Tis true what old Betty said, the French will land here to-day—but they'll land dead corpses. And all our little cargo—they've missed our boat in the gale—it'll all be smashed to bits afore our eyes. It's poor work being a honest merchant."

The men in their queer uniforms carrying their queer weapons, huddled closer together,

hasn't he now? So you see a man's trade comes first—what he gets his bread by. So you see these chaps as meet us mid-Channel and hand us the stuff—they're free traders first and Frenchies after—the same like we're merchants before all. We ain't no quarrel with them. It's the French soldiers we're at war with, not the honest French traders that's in the same boat as us ourselves."

"Then someoody's just made up about Boney coming, so as to keep people busy in the bay while you're smuggling here?" said Edred.

"I wouldn't go so far as that, sir," said the man; "but if it did happen that way it 'ud be a sort of special dispensation for us free trade men that get our living by honest work and honest danger—that's all I say, knowing by what's gone before that you two are safe as any old salt afloat."

and all eyes were fixed on the ship as it came on and on.

"Is it *sure* to be wrecked?" whispered Elfrida, catching at old Lord Arden's hand.

"No hope, my child. Get you home to bed," he said.

It did not make any difference that all this had happened a hundred years ago. There was the cold, furious sea lashing the rocks far down below the cliff. Elfrida could not bear to stay and see that ship smash on the rocks like a carved work-box dropped on a flagstone. She could not even bear to think of seeing it. Poetry was difficult, but to stay here and see a ship wrecked—a ship that had men aboard—was more difficult still.

> Oh, Mouldwarp, do come to me,
> I cannot bear it, do you see,

was not, perhaps, fine poetry, but it expressed her feeling exactly, and, anyhow, it did what it was meant to do. The white mole rubbed against her ankles even as she spoke. She caught it up.

"Oh, what are we to do?"

"Go home," it said, "to the castle—you'll find the door now."

And they turned to go. And as they turned they heard a grinding crunch, mixed with the noise of waves and winds. Then there was a sort of sighing moan from the crowd on the cliff, who had been there all night waiting for the French to land, and then Lord Arden's voice—

"The French have landed. She spoke truth. The French have landed—Heaven help them!"

And as the children ran towards the house they knew that every man in that crowd would now be ready to risk his life to save from the sea those Frenchies for whom they had sat up all night to kill with swords and scythes and bills and meat choppers.

Holding the mole in one hand and dragging Edred by the other, Elfrida got back to the castle and in at the open front door, up the stairs, and straight to a door—she knew it would be the right one, and it was.

On the ground lay their own clothes.

"Change," said the white mole, a little out of breath because it had been held very tight and carried very fast.

And the moment they began to put on their own clothes it seemed that the pigeon noises came closer and closer, and somehow helped them out of the stiff clothes of 1807 and back into the comfortable sailor suits of 1907.

"Did ye find the treasure?" the mole asked, and the children answered, "Why, no; we never thought of it."

"It don't make no odds," said the mole. "I warent dere."

"There?" said Elfrida. "Then we're *here*? We're *now* again, I mean? We're not then?"

"Oh, you're *now*, sure enough," said the mole, "and won't you catch it! Dame Honeysett's been raising the countryside arter ye. Next time ye go gallivantin' into old ancient days you'd best set the clock back. Young folks don't know everything. Get along down and take your scolding."

It ran under one of the chests, and Edred and Elfrida were left looking at each other.

Mrs. Honeysett, very pale and tired-looking, jumped up from her chair by the kitchen fire as they came in.

"You bad, naughty, wicked, ungrateful children," she said, and instantly hugged them both. "Where have you been all this blessed night and all yesterday afternoon?"

"Er——" said Edred, as if that settled it.

"We got into the attic," said Elfrida, "and we've been asleep."

It was quite true. And really I don't see what else it would have been any use to say.

"Oh, don't be cross, dear Mrs. Honeysett," Elfrida went on, "we won't again, and we really couldn't help it."

"One more such a game," said Mrs. Honeysett, solemnly, "and I writes to your aunt to say I won't be 'sponserble for such young limbs. Just one single one more, that's all. So I warn you. Would you like a poached egg to your breakfasts or a home made sausage?"

"You're an angel!" cried Elfrida. "Sausages, please; and we'll never do anything again. I promise faithfully—don't you, Edred?"

"Yes," said Edred. "Poached egg for me. Yes, I promise faithfully."

(*To be continued.*)

THE HOUSE OF ARDEN

BY E. NESBIT.

A STORY FOR CHILDREN.

CHAPTER IV

THE HIGHWAYMAN AND THE ——.

THEY both meant what they said. And yet, of course, it is nonsense to promise that you will never do *anything* again, because, of course, you must do *something* if it's only simple subtraction, or eating poached eggs and sausages. You will, of course, understand that what they meant was that they would never again do anything to cause Mrs. Honeysett a moment's uneasiness, and in order to make this possible the first thing to do was, of course, to find out how to set the clock back. Slowly munching sausage, and feeling, as she always did when she ate slowly, that she was doing something very virtuous and ought to have a prize or a medal for it, Elfrida asked her mind to be kind enough to get some poetry ready by the time she had finished breakfast. And sure enough, her mind, in its own secret backyard, as it were, did get something ready. And while this was happening Elfrida, in what corresponded to her mind's front garden, was wishing that she had been born a poet.

"I wonder," said the girl, "where the clock is that we've got to set back?"

"Oh, Mouldiwarp'll tell us," said the boy.

When breakfast was over they went out into the grassy space round which the ruined walls of the castle rose up so grey and stately with the wallflowers and toad-flax growing out of them, and sat down among the round-faced, white-frilled daisies, and told each other what they had thought, or what they thought they had thought, while they were back in those times when people were afraid of Boney.

And as they sat there it came over Elfrida, suddenly, how good a place it was, and how lucky they were to be there at Arden, so that she said, quite without knowing she was going to say anything,—

> Arden, Arden, Arden,
> Lawn and castle and garden;
> Daisies and grass and wallflowers gold—
> Mouldiwarp, come out of the mould.

"That's more like poetry, that is," said the Mouldiwarp, sitting on the green grass between the children; "more lik'n anything I've heard ye say yet—so 'tis. An' now den, what is it for you dis fine day an' all?"

It seemed in such a good temper that Elfrida asked a question that had long tried to get itself asked.

"Why," was the question, "why do you talk like the country people do?"

"Sussex barn an' bred," said the mole; "but I know other talk. Sussex talk's what they call 'racy of the soil'—means 'smells of the earth' where I live. I can talk all sorts, though. I used to spit French once on a time, young Fitz le seigneur."

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"You must know lots and lots," said Edred.

"I do," said the mole

"How old are you?" Edred asked, in spite of Elfrida's warning, "Hush! it's rude."

"'S old as my tongue an' a little older'n me teeth," said the mole, showing them

"Ah, don't be cross," said Elfrida, "and such a beautiful day, too, and just when we wanted you to show us how to put back the clock and all"

"That's a deed, that is," said the mole; "but you've not quarrelled this three days, so you can go where you please and do what you will Only you're in the way here if you want to stop the clock Get up into the gate tower and look out, and when you see the great clock face, come down at once and sit on the second hand. That'll stop it, if anything will."

Looking out through the breezy arch the children saw a very curious sight.

The green and white of grass and daisies began to swim, as it were, before their eyes The lawn within the castle walls was all uneven because the grass had not been laid there by careful gardeners, with spirit levels and rollers, who wanted to make a lawn, but by Nature herself, who wanted just to cover up bits of broken crockery and stone, and old birds' nests, and all sorts of odd rubbish And now it began to stretch itself, as though it were a live carpet, and to straighten and tighten itself till it lay perfectly flat.

And the grass seemed to be getting greener in places. And in other places there were patches of white thicker and purer than before.

"Look! look!" cried Edred; "look! the daisies are walking about"

They were. Stiffly and steadily, like well-drilled little soldiers, the daisies were forming into twos, into fours, into companies Looking down from the window of the gate tower it was like watching thousands of little white beads sort themselves out from among green ones.

"What *are* they going to do?" Edred asked, but naturally Elfrida was not able to tell him.

The daisies massed themselves together in regiments, in armies. On certain parts of the smooth grass certain companies of them stopped and stayed.

"They're making a sort of pattern," said Edred. "Look! there's a big ring all round —a sort of pattern."

"I should think they were!" cried Elfrida. "Look! look! It's the clock"

It was. On the pure green face of the lawn was an enormous circle marked by a thick line of closely-packed white daisies Within it were the figures that are on the face of a clock—all twelve of them The hands were of white daisies, too, both the minute-hand and the hand that marks the hours, and between the VI and the centre was a smaller circle, also white and of daisies, round which they could see a second-hand move.

With one accord the two children blundered down the dark, dusty, cobwebby, twisty stairs of the gate tower and rushed across the lawn In the very centre of the clock-face sat the Mouldiwarp, looking conscious and a little conceited.

"How *did* you do it?" Elfrida gasped

"The daisies did it. Poor little things! They can't invent at all But they do carry out other people's ideas quite nicely. All the white things have to obey me, of course," it added, carelessly

"And this is The Clock?"

The Mouldiwarp giggled. "My child, what presumption! The clock is much too big for you to see ever—all at once. The sun's the centre of it This is just a pretending clock It'll do for what we want, of course, or I wouldn't have had it made for you. Sit down on the second-hand—oh, no, it won't hurt the daisies. Count a hundred —yes, that's right."

They sat down on the close white line of daisies and began to count earnestly.

"And now," the Mouldiwarp said, when the hundred was counted, "it's just the same time as it was when you began! So now you understand."

"But if we sit here," said Elfrida, "how can we ever be anywhere else?"

"You can't," said the Mouldiwarp "So one of you will have to stay and the other to go."

"You go, Elfie," said Edred. "I'll stay till you come back"

"That's very dear of you," said Elfrida, "but I'd rather we went together Can't you manage it?" she asked the mole.

"I *could*, of course," it said; "but . . . he's afraid to go without you," it said, suddenly.

"He isn't, and he's two years younger than me, anyway," Elfrida said, hotly.

"Well, go without him," said the mole "You understand perfectly, don't you, that when he has stopped the clock your going is the same as your not going, and your being here is the same as not being, and—— What I mean," it added, hastily returning to

"THEY SAT DOWN ON THE CLIMB WHITE LIDS OF DAISIES."

Sussex talk, "you needn' be so turble put out. He won't know you've gone nor yet 'e won't beheve you've come back. Be off with 'e, my gell."

Elfrida hesitated. Then, "Oh, Edred," she said, "I *have* had such a time! Did it seem very long? I know it was horrid of me, but it was so interesting I *couldn't* come back before."

"Nonsense," said Edred. "Well, go n you like, I don't mind."

"I've *been*, I tell you," said Elfrida, dragging him off the second hand of the daisy clock, whose soldiers instantly resumed their wheeling march.

"So now you see," said the mole. "Tell you what—next time you wanter stop de clock we'll just wheel de barrer on to it. Now you go along and play. You've had enough Arden magic for this 'ere Fursday, so you 'ave, bless yer hearts an' all."

And they went.

That was how Edred perceived the adventure of "The Highwayman and the ——" But I will not anticipate. The way the adventure seemed to Elfrida was rather different.

After the mole said "my gell" she hesitated, and then went slowly towards the castle where the red roof of the house showed between the old, ivy-grown grey buttresses. She looked back, to see Edred and the Mouldiwarp close together on the face of the wonderful green and white clock. They were very still. She made her mind up—ran indoors and up the stairs and straight to The Door—she found it at once—shut the door, and opened the second chest to the right.

"You change your clothes and the times change too—
Change, that is what you've got to do;
Cooroo, cooroo, cooroo, cooroo,"

said the pigeons or the silence or Elfrida.

"I wonder," she said, slipping on a quilted green satin petticoat with pink rosebuds embroidered on it, "whether Shakespeare began being a poet like that—just little odd lines coming into his head without him meaning them to." And her mind, as she put on a pink-and white brocaded dress, was busy with such words as "Our great poet, the Honourable Miss Arden," or "Miss Arden, the female Milton of nowadays."

She fitted on a white, soft little cap with pink ribbons and ran to open the door. She was not a bit afraid. It was like going into a dream. Nothing would be real there. Yet—as she ran through the attic door and the lace of her sleeve caught on a big rusty nail and tore with a harsh hissing noise—she felt very sorry.

But she had only half the first half of a thought to give to the lace—for the door opened, not on the quiet corridor with the old prints at Arden Castle, but on a quite strange panelled room, full of a most extraordinary disorder of stuffs—feathers, dresses,

cloaks, bonnet-boxes, parcels, rolls, packets, lace, scarves, hats, gloves, and finery of all sorts There were a good many people there serving-maids—she knew they were serving-maids—a gentleman in knee breeches showing some fine goldsmith's work on a silver tray, and in the middle a very pretty, languishing-looking young lady who looked as silly as she was fair All the women wore enormous crinolines—or hoops

"What I Hid in the closet all the while, cousin?" said the young lady "Oh, but it's the slyest chit! Come, see how the new scarf becomes thy Bet. Is it not vastly modish?"

"Yes," said Elfrida, not knowing in the least what to say

Everything gave a sort of tremble and twist, like the glass bits in a kaleidoscope give just before they settle into a pattern. Then, as with the bits of glass, everything *was* settled, and Elfrida, instead of feeling that she was looking at a picture, felt that she was alive, with live people.

Some extraordinary accident had fixed in Elfrida's mind the fact that Queen Anne began to reign in 1702. I don't know how it was. These accidents do sometimes occur. And she knew that in Queen Anne's day ladies wore hoops. Also, since they had gone back a hundred years to Boney's time, perhaps this second venture had taken her back two hundred years. If so——

"Please," she said, very quickly, "is this 1707, and is Queen Anne dead?"

"Heaven forbid," said everyone in the room; and Bet added, "La, child, don't delay us with your prattle. The coach will be here at ten, and we must lie at Tonbridge to-night."

So Elfrida, all eyes and ears, squeezed into a corner between a band box and a roll of thick, blue flowered silk and looked and listened

Bet, she gathered, was her cousin—an Arden, too She and Bet and the maids, and an escort of she couldn't quite make out how many men, were to go down to Arden together The many men were because of the Arden jewels, that had been re-set in the newest mode, and the collar of pearls and other presents Uncle Arden had given to Bet and the highwaymen, who, Elfrida learned, were growing so bold that they would attack a coach in St Paul's Churchyard in broad daylight Bet, it seemed, had undertaken commissions for all her girl friends near Arden, and had put off most of them till the last moment She had carefully spent her own pin-money during her stay in town, and was now hastily spending theirs. The room was crowded with tradesmen and women actually pushing each other to get near the lady who had money to spend One woman with a basket of china was offering it in exchange for old clothes or shoes, just as old women do now at back doors. And Cousin Bet's maid had a very good bargain, she considered, in a china tea-pot and two dishes, in exchange for an old green lutestring dress and a hooped petticoat of violet quilted satin. Then there was a hasty meal of cold bacon and bread and beer, and, Elfrida being wrapped up in long-skirted coat and scarves almost beyond bearing, it was announced that the coach was at the door.

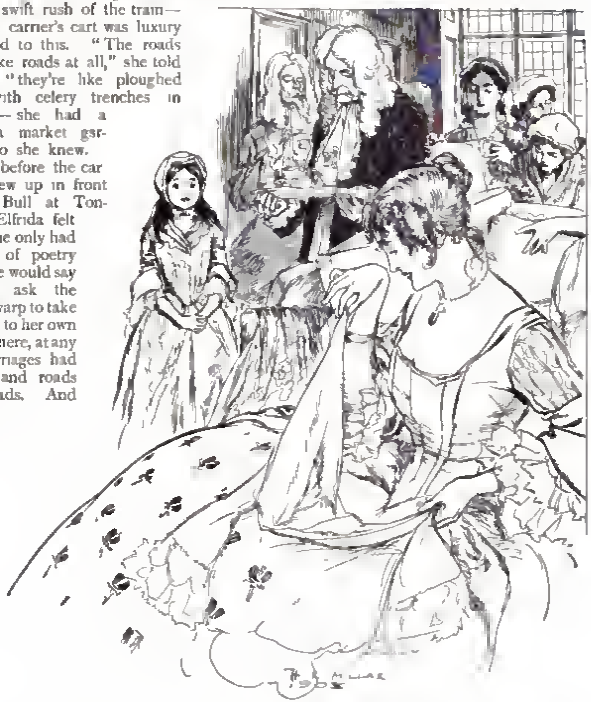
It was a very tight fit when at last they were all packed into the carriage, for though the carriage was large there was a great deal to fill it up, what with Cousin Bet and her great hoops, and the maids and their hoops, and the band-boxes and packages of different sizes and shapes, and the horrid little pet dog that yapped and yahed, and tried to bite everyone, from the footmen to Elfrida. The streets were narrow and very dirty, and smelt very nasty in the hot June sun

And it was very hot and stuffy inside the carriage, and more bumpety than you would think possible—more bumpety even than a wagon going across a furrowed corn-field Elfrida felt rather headachy, like you do when you go out in a small boat and everyone says it is not at all rough By the time the carriage got to Lewisham Elfrida's bones were quite sore, and she felt as though she had been beaten There were no springs to the carriage, and it reminded her of a bathing machine more than anything else—you know the way it bumps on the shingly part of the shore when they are drawing you up the beach, and you tumble about and can't go on dressing, and all your things slide off the seats The maids were cross and looked it. Cousin Bet had danced till nigh midnight, and been up with the lark, so she said And, having said it, went to sleep in a corner of the carriage looking crosser than the maids. Elfrida began to feel that empty, uninterested sensation which makes you wish you hadn't come. The carriage plunged and rattled on through the green country, the wheels bounding in and out of the most dreadful ruts. More than once the wheel got into a rut so deep that it took all the men to heave it out again. Cousin Bet woke up to say that it was vastly annoying and instantly went to sleep again

Elfrida, being the smallest person in the

carriage except Amour, the dog, was constantly being thrown into somebody's lap—to the annoyance of both parties. It was very much the most uncomfortable ride she had ever had. She thought of the smooth, swift rush of the train—even the carrier's cart was luxury compared to this. "The roads aren't like roads at all," she told herself; "they're like ploughed fields with celery trenches in them"—she had a friend a market gardener, so she knew.

Long before the carriage drew up in front of the Bull at Tonbridge Elfrida felt that if she only had a piece of poetry ready she would say it, and ask the Mouldwarp to take her back to her own times, where, at any rate, carriages had springs and roads *were* roads. And when the carriage did stop she was so stiff she could hardly stand.



"COME, SEE HOW THE NEW SCARF BECOMES THY NET. IS IT NOT VASTLY MODISH?"

"Come along in," said a stout, pleasant-faced lady in a frilled cap; "come in, my poppet. There's a fine supper, though it's me says it, and a bed that you won't beat in Kent for soft and clean, you may lay to that."

There was a great bustle of shouting ostlers and stablemen, the horses were taken out before the travellers were out of the carriage. Supper was laid in a big upper room, with shining furniture and bow windows at both ends, one set looking on the road where the sign of the Bell creaked and swung from a tall post, and the other looking on a very neat green garden, with clipped box hedges and yew arbours. Getting all the luggage into the house seemed likely to be a long business. Elfrida saw that she would not be missed, and she slipped down the twisty cornery back stairs and through the back kitchen into the green garden. It was pleasant to stretch one's legs, and not to be cramped and buffeted and shaken. But she walked down the grass path rather demurely, for she was very stiff indeed.

And it was there, in a yew arbour, that she

came suddenly on the grandest and handsomest gentleman that she had ever seen. He wore a white wig, very full at the sides and covered with powder, and a full-skirted coat of dark-blue silk, and under it a long waistcoat with the loveliest roses and forget-me-nots in bunches, embroidered on silk and tied in bunches with gold ribbons. He had lace ruffles and a jewelled brooch, and the jolliest blue eyes in the world. He looked at Elfrida very kindly with his jolly eyes.

"A lady of quality, I'll be buund," he said, "and travelling with her suite."

"I'm Miss Arden of Arden," said Elfrida.

"Your servant, madam," said he, springing to his feet and waving his hat in a very flourishing sort of bow.

Elfrida's little curtsy was not at all the right kind of curtsy, but it had to do.

"And what can I do to please Miss Arden of Arden?" he asked. "Would she like a ride on my black mare?"

"Oh, *no*, thank you," said Elfrida, so earnestly that he laughed as he said—

"Sure I should not have thought fear lived with those eyes."

"I'm not afraid," said Elfrida, contemptuously; "only I've been riding in a horrible carriage all day, and I feel as though I never wanted to ride on anything any more."

He laughed again.

"Well, well," he said, "come and sit by me and tell me all the town news."

Elfrida smiled to think what news she *could* tell him, and then frowned in the effort to think of any news that wouldn't seem nonsense.

She told him all that she knew of Cousin Bet and the journey. He was quite politely interested. She told of Cousin Bet's purchases—the collar of pearls and the gold pomander studded with corals, the little gold watch, and the family jewels that had been reset.

"And you have all to-night to rest in from the cruel coach?" he said.

"Yes," said Elfrida; "we don't go on again till after breakfast to-morrow. It's very dull—and oh, so slow! Don't you think you'd like to have a carriage drawn by a fiery iron horse that went sixty miles in an hour?"

"You have an ingenious wit," said the beautiful gentleman, "such as I should admire in my wife. Will you marry me when you shall be grown a great girl?"

"No," said Elfrida, "you'd be too old—even if you were to be able to stop alive till I was grown up, you'd be much too old."

"How old do you suppose I shall be when you're seventeen?"

"I should have to do sums," said Elfrida, who was rather good at these exercises. She broke a twig from a currant bush and scratched in the dust.

"I don't know," she said, raising a flushed face, and trampling out her "sum" with little shoes that had red heels, "but I *think* you'll be two hundred and thirty."

On that he laughed more than ever and vowed she was the lady for him. "Your ciphering would double my income ten times over," he said.

He was very kind indeed—would have her taste his wine, which she didn't like, and the little cakes on the red and blue plate, which she did.

"And what's *your* name?" she asked.

"My name," said he, "is a secret. Can you keep a secret?"

"Yes," said Elfrida.

"So can I," said he.

And then a flouncing, angry maid came suddenly sweeping down between the box hedges and dragged Elfrida away before she could curtsy properly and say, "Thank you for being so kind."

"Farewell," said the beautiful gentleman, "doubt not but we shall meet again. And next time 'tis I shall carry thee off and shut thee in a tower for two hundred years till thou art seventeen and hast learned to cipher."

Elfrida was slapped by the maid, which nearly choked her with fury, and set down to supper in the big upstairs room. The maid indignantly told where she had found Elfrida "talking with a strange gentleman," and when Cousin Betty had heard all about it Elfrida told her tale.

"And he was a great dear," she said.

"A——?"

"A very beautiful gentleman. I wish you'd been there, Cousin Betty. *You'd* have loved him too."

Then Cousin Bet also slapped her. And Elfrida wished more than ever that she had some poetry ready for the Mouldiwarp.

The next day's journey was as bumpety as the first, and Elfrida got very tired of the whole business.

"Oh, I wish something would happen," she said.

It was a very much longer day too, and the dusk had fallen while still they were on the road. The sun had set red behind black trees, and brown twilight was thickening all about, when, at a cross-roads, a man in a cloak and mask on a big black horse suddenly leaped from a hedge, stooped from his saddle,

opened the carriage door, caught Elfrida with one hand by the gathers of her full travelling coat (he must have been frightfully strong, and so must the gathers), set her very neatly and quite comfortably on the saddle before him, and said —

"Hand up your valuables, please—or I shoot the horses. And keep your barkers low, for if you aim at me you shoot the child."

Then Elfrida knew who he was.

"Oh," she cried, "you *are* mean!"

"Trade's trade," said he, but he held her quite gently and kindly. "Now, my fair madam——"

The men were hesitating, fingering their pistols. The horses, frightened by the sudden check, were dancing and prancing all across the road; the maidservants were shouting that

"And if you shoot my horse, the child and I fall together."

But even as he spoke he wheeled the horse so that his body was a shield between her and the pistols of the serving men.

"What do you want?" Cousin Bet's voice was quite squeaky. "We have no valuables—we are plain country people, travelling home to our farm."

"I want the collar of pearls," said he, "and the pomander, and the little gold watch, and the jewels that have been reset."

it was true; he had the child, and better lose a few jewels than all their lives, and Cousin Bet was sobbing and wailing inside the dark coach.

Well, the jewels were handed out—that was how it ended—handed out slowly and grudgingly, and the hand that reached for them through the dusk was very white. Cousin Bet said afterwards.

Elfrida, held by the highwayman's arm, kept very still. Suddenly he stooped and whispered in her ear.

"Are you afraid that I shall do you any harm?"

"No," whispered Elfrida. And to this day she does not know why she was not afraid.

"Then——" said he. "Oh, the brave little lady!"

And on that suddenly set spurs to his horse, leapt the low hedge, and reined up sharply.

"Go on home, my brave fellows," he shouted, "and keep your mouths shut on this night's work. I shall be at Arden before you——"

"The child!" shrieked the maids; "oh, the child!" and even Cousin Bet interrupted her hysterics, now quite strong and overwhelming, to say, "The child!"

"Shall I order supper for you at Arden?" he shouted back, mockingly, and rode on across country, with Elfrida, breathlessly frightened and consciously brave, leaning back against his shoulder. It is a very wonderful feeling, riding through the night on a great strong dark horse, through a deepening night in a strange country held fast by an arm that you can trust, and with the muscles of a horse's great shoulder rippling against your legs as they hang helplessly down. Elfrida ceased to think of Mouldiwarps or to try to be a poet.

And quite soon they were at the top of Arden Hill, and the lights of the castle gleamed and blinked below them.

"Now, sweetheart," said the highwayman, "I shall set you down in sight of the door and wait till the door opens. You can tell them all that has chanced save this that I tell you now. You will see me again. They will not know me, but you will. Keep a still tongue till to-morrow, and I swear Miss Arden shall have all her jewels again, and you shall have a gold locket to put your true love's hair in when you're seventeen and I'm two hundred and thirty. And leave the parlour window open. And when I tap, come to it. Is it a bargain?"

"Then you're not really a highwayman?"

"What should you say," he asked, "if I told you that I was the third James, the rightful King of England, come to claim my own?"

"Oh!" said Elfrida, breathless. And he set her down, and she walked to the door of the castle and thumped on it with her fists.

Her tale had been told to the servants, and again to Cousin Bet and the maids, and the chorus of lament and astonishment was settling down to a desire to have something to eat; anyhow, the servants had gone to the kitchen to hurry the supper. Cousin Bet and Elfrida were alone in the parlour, where Elfrida had dutifully set the window ajar.

The laurel that was trained all up that side of the house stirred in the breeze and tapped at the window. Elfrida crossed to the window-seat. No, it was only the laurel. But next moment a hand tapped—a hand with rings on it, and a white square showed in the window—a letter.

"For Miss Betty Arden," said a whispering voice.

Elfrida carried the letter to where her cousin sat and laid it on her lap.

"For me, child? Where did you get it?"

"Read it," said Elfrida, "it's from a gentleman."

"Lud!" said Cousin Bet. "What a day!—a highwayman and the jewels lost and now a love-letter."

She opened it, read it—read it again and let her hand flutter out with it in a helpless sort of way towards Elfrida, who, very brisk and businesslike, took it and read it. It was clearly and beautifully written.

"The Chevalier St. George," it said, "visiting his kingdom in secret on pressing affairs of State, asks housing and hiding beneath the roof of the loyal Ardens."

"Now, don't scream," said Elfrida, sharply; "who's the Chevalier St. George?"

"Our King," said Betty, in a whisper—"our King over the water—King James the Third. Oh, why isn't my uncle at home? They'll kill the King if they find him. What shall I do? What shall I do?"

"Do?" said Elfrida. "Why, don't be so silly. That's what you've got to do. Why, it's a glorious chance. Think how everyone will say how brave you were. Is he Bonnie Prince Charlie? Will he be King some day?"

"No, not Charles—James; uncle wants him to be King."

"Then let's help him," said Elfrida, "and perhaps it'll be your doing that he is King." Her history had never got beyond Edward the Fourth because of having to go back to 1066 on account of new girls, and she had only heard of Prince Charlie in ballads and story books. "And when he's King he'll make you Dowager Duchess of Somewhere and give you his portrait set in diamonds. Now don't scream. He's outside. I'll call him in. Where can we hide him?"

(To be continued.)

The House of Arden

BY E. NESBIT

A STORY FOR CHILDREN.

CHAPTER V.

THE SECRET PANEL.

"WHERE shall we hide him?" Elfrida asked, impatiently.

Cousin Bet, fired by Elfrida's enthusiasm, jumped up and began to finger the carved flowers above the chimneypiece.

"The secret room," she said; "but slip the bolt to and turn the key in the lock."

Elfrida locked the room door, and turned to see the carved mantelpiece open like a cupboard

Then Elfrida flew to the window and set back the casement quite wide, and in climbed the beautiful gentleman and stood there, very handsome and tall, bowing to Miss Betty, who sank on her knees and kissed the white, jewelled hand he held out.

"Quick!" said Elfrida. "Get into the hole."

"There are stairs," said Betty, snatching a candle in its silver candlestick and holding it high

The Chevalier St. George sprang to a chair, got his knee on the mantelpiece, and went into the hole, just as Alice goes through the looking-glass in Mr Tenniel's picture. Betty handed him the candle, which his white hand reached down to take. Then Elfrida jumped on the chair and shut the panel, leaped down, and opened the room door just as the maid reached its other side with the supper tray.

When the cousins were alone Bet threw her arms round Elfrida.

"Don't be afraid, little cousin," she whispered, "your Cousin Bet will see that no harm comes to you from this adventure."

"Well, I do think!" said Elfrida, getting out of the embrace most promptly, "when it was me let him in, and you'd have screamed the house down if I hadn't stopped you——"

"Stop chattering, child," said Bet, drawing a distracted hand over her pretty forehead, "and let me set my wits to work, how I may serve my King."

"I," said Elfrida, scornfully, "should give him something to eat and see that his bed's aired, but I suppose that would be too vulgar and common for you."

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The two looked at each other across the untasted supper.

"Impertment chit," said Bet.

"Chit yourself," retorted Elfrida.

Then she laughed.

"Come, Cousin Bet," she said, "your uncle's away and you're grown up. I'll tell you what to do. You just be wise and splendid, so that your portrait'll be in the illustrated Christmas numbers in white satin and an anxious expression. 'The saviour of her King'—that's what it'll say."

"Don't wander in your speech, child," said Cousin Bet, pressing her hand to her brow, "I've enough to distract me without that. And if you desire to ask my pardon, do so."

"Oh, well, I beg your pardon—there!" said Elfrida, with extreme irritation. "*Now* perhaps you'll give your King something to eat."

"Climb into that hole—with a tray? And the servants, perhaps, coming in any minute? What would you say to them if they did?"

"All right, then, *I'll* go," said Elfrida, ooly too glad of the chance.

Bet touched the secret spring, and when Elfrida had climbed into the dark hole—which she did quite easily—handed her the supper tray.

"Oh, bother," said Elfrida, setting it down at her feet with great promptness. "It's too heavy. He'll have to come down and fetch it. Give me a candle and shut the panel, and tell me which way to go."

"To the right and up the steps. Be sure you kneel and kiss his hand before you say a word."

Elfrida reached down for the candle in its silver candlestick, the panel clicked into place, and she stood there among the cob webby shadows of the secret passage, the light in her hand and the tray at her feet.

"It's only a Mouldwarp magic adventure," she said, to hearten herself, turned to the right, and went up the stairs. They were steep and narrow. At the top she saw the long, light line of a slightly opened door. To knock seemed unwise. Instead, she spoke softly, her lips against the line of light.

"It's me," she said, and instantly the door opened and the beautiful gentleman stood before her.

The secret room had a little furniture—a couch, a table, chairs—all old fashioned, and their shapes showed beautiful, even in the dim light of the two candles.

"Your supper," said Elfrida, "is at the bottom of the stairs. The tray was too heavy for me. Do you mind fetching it up?"

"If you'll show me a light," he said, and went.

"You'll stay and eat with me?" said he, when she had lighted him back to the secret room and he had set the tray on the table.

"I mustn't," said Elfrida. "Cousin Bet's such a muff, she wouldn't know where to say I was if the servants came in. Oh, I say! I'm so sorry I forgot. She told me to kneel and kiss your hand before I said anything about supper. I'll do it now."

"Nay," said he, "I'll kiss thy cheek, little lady, and drink a health to him who shall kiss thy lips when thou'rt seventeen and I am—what was it—five hundred?"

"Two hundred and thirty," said Elfrida, returning his kiss cordially.

"The absent tray will betray you," said he, taking food and wine from it and setting them on the table. "Now I will carry this down again. You have all the courage, but not quite the cunning, of a conspirator."

"How long are you going to stay here?" Elfrida asked. "I suppose you're escaping from someone or something, like in history?"

"I shall not stay long," he said. "If anyone should ask you if you have seen the King, what would you say?"

"I should say 'no,'" said Elfrida, boldly. "You see, I can't possibly know that you're the King. You just say so, that's all. Perhaps really you aren't."

"Exquisite!" said he. "So you don't believe me?"

"Oh, yes, I do!" said Elfrida, "but I needn't, you know."

"S'life!" he said. "But I wish I were. There'd be a coronet for somebody."

"You wish you were——"

"Safely away, my little lady. And as for coronets, the jewels are safe. See, I have set them in the cupboard in the corner."

Then he carried down the tray, and Elfrida, who was very hungry, tried to persuade Bet that she must eat, if only to keep up her strength for the deeds of daring that might want doing at any moment.

But Bet declared that she could not eat; the least morsel would choke her. And as for going to bed, she was assuring her cousin that she knew her duty to her King better than that, and that she would defend her Sovereign with her life, if need were, when her loyal ecstasies were suddenly interrupted.

For the quiet of the night was broken by a great knocking at the castle door and the heavy voice of a man crying—

"Open, in the Queen's name!"

"They've come for him! All is lost! We are betrayed! What shall we do?"

"*Eat*," said Elfrida; "eat for your life."

She pushed Bet into a chair and thrust a plate before her, put a chunk of meat-pie on her plate and another on her own.

"Get your mouth full," she whispered, filling her own as she spoke — "so full you can't speak—it'll give you time to think."

And then the door opened, and in a moment the room was full of gentlemen in riding dress, with very stern faces. And they all had swords.

Betty, with her mouth quite full, was trying not to look towards the panel.

Elfrida, whose mouth was equally full, looked at the gentleman who seemed to be leading the others, and remarked:—

'This is a nice time of night to come knocking people up!"

"All hours are alike to a loyal subject," said a round, fat, blue-eyed gentleman in a green suit. "Have you any strangers under your roof to-night?"

Oh!" cried Bet, "all is lost!"

The gentlemen exchanged glances and crowded round her.

"You *have* a stranger here?" they asked, and "Where is he?" and "You cannot refuse to give him up."

"My heart told me so," cried Bet. "I knew it was he you were seeking," and with that she fainted elegantly into the arms of the nearest gentleman.

"Ask the child—children and fools speak the truth," said the fat, blue-eyed gentleman.

Elfrida found herself suddenly lifted on to the table, from which she could see over the heads of the gentlemen who stood all round her. She could see Bet reclining on the sofa, and the open door with servants crowding in it, all eyes and ears.

"'NOW,' SAID A DOZEN VOICES, 'THE TRUTH, LITTLE MISS.'"

"Now," said a dozen voices, "the truth, little miss."

"What do you want to know?" she asked, and, in a much lower tone, "I sha'n't tell you anything unless you send the servants away."

The door was closed and the truth was asked for again.

"If you'll only tell me what you want to know," she repeated.

"Does any stranger lie here to-night?"

"No," said Elfrida. She knew that the beautiful gentleman in the secret chamber was not lying down, but sitting to his supper.

"But Miss Arden said 'All is lost,' and she knew 'twas he whom we sought."

"Well," Elfrida carefully explained, "it's like this. You see, we were robbed by a highwayman to-day, and I think that upset my cousin. She's rather easily upset, I'm afraid."

"Very easily," several voices agreed; and someone added that it was a hare-brained business.

"The shortest way's the best," said the plum-coloured gentleman. "Is Sir Edward Talbot here?"

"No, he isn't," said Elfrida, downrightly; "and I don't believe you've got any business coming into people's houses and frightening other people into fits, and I shall tell Lord Arden when he comes home."

"Zooks!" someone cried, "the child's got a spirit; and she's right, too, strike me if she isn't."

"If," said Elfrida, "you think your Talbot's playing hide-and-seek here, and if he's done anything wrong, you can look for him if you like. But I don't believe Lord Arden will like it. That's all. I should like to get down on to the floor, if you please!"

I don't know whether Elfrida would have had the courage to say all this if she had not remembered that this was history times, and not now-times. But the gentlemen seemed delighted with her bravery.

They lifted her gently down, and, with many apologies for having discommoded the ladies, they went out of the room and out of the castle. Through the window Elfrida heard their voices and the clatter and stamp of their horses' hoofs as they mounted and rode off, laughing heartily.

She could not bear to go back into her own time without seeing the end of the adventure. So she went to bed in a large four-poster, with Cousin Bet for company. The fainting fit lasted exactly as long as the strange gentlemen were in the house, which was very convenient.

Elfrida got up very early in the morning and went down into the parlour. She had meant to go and see how the King was, and whether he wanted his shaving-water first thing, as her daddy used to do. But it was so very, very early that she decided that it would be better to wait a little. The King might be sleepy, and sleepy people were not always grateful, she knew, for early shaving-water.

So she went out into the fields where the dew was grey on the grass, and up on to Arden Knoll. And she stood there and heard the skylarks. And presently she saw two figures coming across the fields from where the spire of Arden Church rose out of the tops of trees as round and green as the best double-curled parsley. And one of the gentlemen wore a green coat and the other a purple coat, and she thought to herself how convenient it was to recognise people half a mile away by the colour of their clothes.

Quite plainly they were going to the castle—so she went down too, and met them at the gate with a civil "Good morning."

"You are no he-abed, at least," said the green gentleman. "And so no stranger lay at Arden last night, eh?"

Elfrida found this difficult to answer. No doubt the King had lain—was probably still lying—in the secret chamber. But was he a stranger? No, of course he wasn't. So—

"No," she said.

And then through the open window of the parlour came, very unexpectedly and suddenly, a leg in a riding boot, then another leg, and then the whole of the beautiful gentleman stood in front of them.

"So ho!" he said. "Speak softly, for the servants are not yet about."

"They *are*," said Elfrida, "only they're at the back. Creep along under the wall, you will get away without their seeing you then."

"Always a wonderful counsellor," said the beautiful gentleman, bowing gracefully. "Come with us, little maid. I have no secrets from thee."

So they all crept along close to the castle wall to that corner from which, between two shoulders of down, you can see the sea. There they stopped.

"And the wager's mine," said the beautiful gentleman, "for all you tried to spoil it. That was not in the bond, Fitzgerald, entering Arden at night at nine of the clock, to ferret me out like a pack of hounds after Reynard."

"There was nothing barred," said the green gentleman. "We tried waylaying you on the road, but you were an hour early."

"Ah," said the beautiful gentleman, "putting back clocks is easy work. And the ostler at the Bull loves a handsome wager nigh as well as he loves a guinea."

"I do *wish* you'd explain," said Elfrida,

almost stamping with curiosity and impatience.

"And so I will, my pretty," said he, laughing.

"Aren't you the King? You said you were."

"Nay, nay—not so fast. I asked thee what thou wouldst say if I told you I was King James."

"Then who *are* you?" she asked.

"Plain Edward Talbot, Baronet, at your ladyship's service," he said, with another of his fine bows.

"But I don't *understand*," she said, "*do* tell me all about it from the beginning." So he told her, and the other gentlemen stood by, laughing.

"The other night I was dining with Mr. Fitzgerald here, and the talk turned on highway robbery, and on Arden Castle here, with other matters. And these gentlemen, with others of the party, laid me a wager—five hundred guineas it was—that I would not rob a coach. I took the wager. And I wagered beside that I would rob a coach of the Arden jewels, and that I would lie a night at Arden beside, and no one should know my name there. And I have done both, and won my wager. I am but newly come home from foreign parts, so your cousin could not know my face. But, zounds, child! had it not been for thee I had lost my wager. I counted on Miss Arden's help—and a pale faced, fainting, useless fine lady I should have found her. But thou—thou'rt a girl in a thousand. And I'll buy thee the finest faring I can find next time I go to London. We are all friends. Tell pretty miss to hold that tongue of hers, and none shall hear the tale from us."

"But all these gentlemen coming last night. All the servants know."

"The gentlemen came, no doubt, to protect Miss Arden, in case the villainous highwayman should have hidden behind the window curtain. Oh, but the wise child it is—has a care for every weak point in our armour!"

Then he told his friends the whole of the adventure, and they laughed very merrily, for all they had lost their wager, and went home to breakfast across the dewy fields.

"It's nice of him to think me brave and all that," Elfrida told herself, "but I *do* wish he'd *really* been the King."

When she had told Betty what had happened everything seemed suddenly to be not worth while; she did not feel as though she cared to stay any longer in that part of the past—so she ran upstairs, through the attic and the pigeon-noises, back into her own times, and went down and found Edred sitting on the second-hand of the daisy-clock, and he did not believe she had been away at all. For all the time she had been away seemed no time to him, because he had been sitting on that second-hand.

So when the Mouldiwarp told them to go along in, they went, and the way they went was not in, but out, and round under the castle wall to the corner from which you could see the sea. And there they lay on the warm grass, and Elfrida told Edred the whole story, and at first he did not believe a word of it.

"But it's true, I tell you," said she. "You don't suppose I should make up a whole tale like that, do you?"

"No," said Edred. "Of course, you're not clever enough. But you might have read it in a book."

"Well, I didn't," said Elfrida, "so there!"

"If it was really true, you might have come back for me. You know how I've always wanted to meet a highwayman—you know you do."

"How could I come back? How was I to get off the horse and run home and get in among the chests and the pigeon-noises and come out here and take you back? The highwayman—Talbot, I mean—would have been gone long before we got back."

"No, he wouldn't," said Edred, obstinately. "You forget I was sitting on the clock and stopping it. There wasn't any time while you were gone—if you *were* gone."

"There was with *me*," said Elfrida. "Don't you see——"

"There wouldn't have been if you'd come back where I was," Edred interrupted.

"How can you be so aggravating?" Elfrida found suddenly that she was losing her temper. "You *can't* be as stupid as that, really."

"Oh, can't I?" said Edred. "I can, though, if I like. And stupider—*much* stupider," he added, darkly. "You wait."

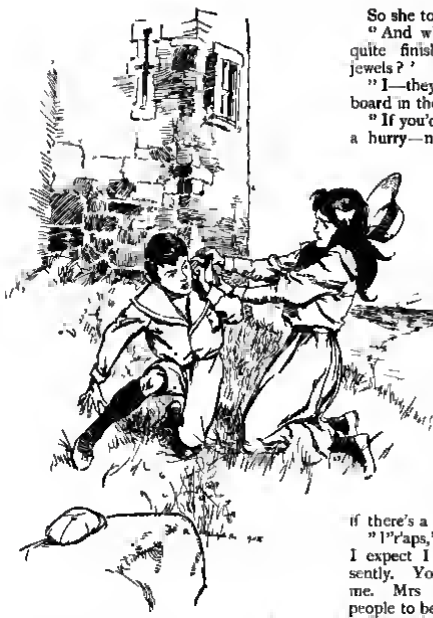
"Edred," said his sister, slowly and fervently, "sometimes I feel as if I *must* shake you."

"You daren't!" said Edred.

"Do you dare me to?"

"Yes," said Edred, fiercely.

Of course, you are aware that after that, by all family laws, Elfrida was obliged to shake him. She did, and burst into tears. He looked at her for a moment and—but no—tears are unmanly. I would not betray the weaknesses of my hero. Let us draw a veil,



"ELFRIDA WAS OBLIGED TO SHAKE HIM"

So she told him all over again.

"And where," said Edred, when she had quite finished, "where did you put the jewels?"

"I—they—he put them in the corner cupboard in the secret room," said Elfrida.

"If you'd taken me and not been in such a hurry—no, I'm not quarrelling, I'm only reasoning with you like Aunt Edith—if *I'd* been there I should have buried those jewels somewhere and then come back for me, and we'd have dug them up, and been rich beyond the dreams of—what do you call it"

"But I never told Betty where they were. Perhaps they're there now. Let's go and look"

"If they are," said he, "I'll believe everything you've been telling me without trying at all."

"You'll have to do that if there's a secret room, won't you?"

"I'r'aps," said Edred, "let's go and see. I expect I shall have got a headache presently. You didn't ought to have shaken me. Mrs Honeysett says it's very bad for people to be shaken—it mixes up their brains inside their heads so that they ache, and you're stupid. I expect that's what made you say I was stupid."

"Oh, dear," said Elfrida, despairingly. "You know that was before I shook you, and I did say I was sorry."

"I know it was, but it comes to the same thing. Come on—let's have a squint at your old secret room."

But, unfortunately, it was now dinner time. If you do happen to know the secret of a carved panel with a staircase hidden away behind it, you don't want to tell that secret lightly—as though it were the day of the week, or the date of the Battle of Waterloo, or what nine times seven is—not even to a grown-up so justly liked as Mrs. Honeysett. And, besides, a hot beefsteak pudding and greens do not seem to go well with the romances of old days. To have looked for the spring of that panel while that dinner smoked on the board would have been as unseemly as to try on a new gold crown over curl-papers. Elfrida

or take a turn round the castle and come back to them presently.

It is just as well that we went away when we did, for we really turned our backs on a most unpleasant scene. And now that we come back to them, though they are still crying, Elfrida is saying that she is very sorry.

"Oh, all right," he says, "I'm sorry too. There! But us saying we're sorry won't make us unquarrel. That's the worst of it. We sha'n't be able to find The Door for three days now. I do wish we hadn't. It *is* sickening."

"Never mind," said Elfrida, "we didn't have a real I'll-never-speak-to-you-again quarrel, did we?"

"I don't suppose it matters what sort of quarrel you have," said the boy, in gloom. "Look here—I'll tell you what—you tell me all about it over again and I'll try to believe you. I really will, on the honour of an Arden."

felt this. And Edred did not more than half believe in the secret, anyway. And, besides, he was very hungry.

"Wait till afterwards," was what they said to each other in whispers, while Mrs. Honeysett was changing the plates.

"You do do beautiful cooking," Edred remarked, as the gooseberry pie was cut open and revealed its chrysoprase coloured contents.

"You do the beautiful eating then," said Mrs. Honeysett, "and you be quick about it. You ain't got into no mischief this morning, have you? You look as though butter wouldn't melt in either of your mouths, and that's always a sign of something being up with most children."

"No, *indeed* we haven't," said Elfrida, earnestly, "and we don't mean to either. And our looking like that's only because we brushed our hairs with wet brushes, most likely. It does make you look good, somehow, I've often noticed it."

"I've been flying round this morning," Mrs. Honeysett went on, "so as to get down to my sister's for a bit this afternoon. She's not so well again, poor old dear, and I might be kept late. But my niece Emily's coming up to take charge. She's a nice lively young girl, she'll get you your teas, and look after you as nice as nice. Now don't you go doing anything what you wouldn't if I was behind of you, will you? That's dears."

Nothing could have happened better. Both children felt that Emily, being a young girl, would be more easy to manage than Mrs. Honeysett. As soon as they were alone they talked it over comfortably, and decided that the best thing to do would be to ask Emily if she would go down to the station and see if there was a parcel there for Master Arden or Miss Arden.

"And if there isn't," Elfrida giggled, "we'll say she'd better wait till it comes. We'll run down and fetch her as soon as we've explored the secret chamber."

"I say," Edred remarked, thoughtfully, "we haven't bothered much about finding the treasure, have we? I thought that was what we were going into history for."

"Now, Edred," said his sister, "you know very well we didn't go into history on purpose."

"No—but," said Edred, "we ought to have. Suppose the treasure is really these jewels. We'd sell them and rebuild Arden Castle like it used to be, wouldn't we?"

"We'd give Auntie Edith a few jewels, I think, wouldn't we? She is such a dear, you know."

"Yes, she should have first choice. I do believe we're on the brink, and I feel just exactly like as if something real was going to happen—not in history, but here at Arden—Now Arden."

"I *do* hope we find the jewels," said Elfrida. "Oh, I do! And I do hope we manage the lively young girl all right."

Mrs. Honeysett's best dress was a nice bright red—the kind of colour you can see a long way off. They watched it till it disappeared round a shoulder of the downs, and then set about the task of managing Emily.

The lively young girl proved quite easy to manage. The idea of "popping on her hat" and running down to the station was naturally much pleasanter to her than the idea of washing the plates that had been used for beefsteak pudding and gooseberry pie, and then giving the kitchen a thorough scrub out—which was the way Mrs. Honeysett had meant her to spend the afternoon.

Her best dress—she had slipped the skirt over her print gown so as to look smart as she came up through the village—was a vivid violet, another good distance colour. It also was watched till it dipped into the lane.

"And now," cried Elfrida, "we're all alone, and we can explore the great secret!"

"But suppose somebody comes," said Edred, "and interrupts, and finds it out, and grabs the jewels, and all is lost. There's tramps, you know, and gipsy-women with baskets!"

"Yes—or a drink of water, or to ask the time. I'll tell you what—we'll lock up the doors, back and front."

They did. But even this did not satisfy the suddenly cautious Edred.

"The parlour door, too," he said.

So they locked the parlour door, and Elfrida put the key in a safe place, "for fear of accidents," she said. I do not at all know what she meant, and when she came to think it over later she did not know either. But it seemed all right at the time.

They had provided themselves with a box of matches and a candle—and now the decisive moment had come, as they say about battles.

Elfrida fumbled for the secret spring.

"How does it open?" asked the boy.

"I'll show you presently," said the girl. She could not show him then, because, in point of fact, she did not know. She only knew there *was* a secret spring, and she was feeling for it with both hands among the carved wreaths of the panels, as she stood

with one foot on each of the arms of a very high chair—the only chair in the room high enough for her to be able to reach all round the panel. Suddenly something clicked and the secret door flew open—she just had time to jump to the floor, or it would have knocked her down.

Then she climbed up again and got into the hole, and Edred handed her the candle.

"Where's the matches?" she asked

"In my pocket," said he, firmly. "I'm not going to have you starting off without me—*again*."

"EDRED AND HIS BIG CHAIR FELL TO THE FLOOR.

"Well, come on, then," said Elfrida, ignoring the injustice of this speech.

"All right," said Edred, climbing on the chair. "How does it open?"

He had half closed the door, and was feeling among the carved leaves, as he had seen her do.

"Oh, come on," said Elfrida; "oh—look out!"

Well might she request her careless brother to look out. As he reached up to touch the carving the chair tilted, he was jerked forward, caught at the carving to save himself, missed it, and fell forward with all his weight against the half-open door. It shut with a loud bang. Then a resounding crash echoed through the quiet house as Edred and the big chair fell to the floor in, so to speak, each other's arms.

There was a stricken pause. Then Elfrida from the other side of the panel beat upon it with her fists and shouted—

"Open the door! You aren't hurt, are you?"

"Yes, I am—very much," said Edred, from the outside of the secret door, and also from the hearthrug. "I've twisted my leg in the knickerbocker part, and I've got a great bump on my head, and I think I'm going to be very poorly."

"Well, open the panel first," said Elfrida, rather unfeelingly. But then she was alone in the dark on the other side of the panel.

"I don't know how to," said Edred, and Elfrida heard the sound of someone picking himself up from among disordered furniture.

"Feel among the leaves, like I did," she said; "it's quite easy. You'll soon find it."

There was no answer from Edred, only silence.

(To be continued.)

THE HOUSE OF ARDEN

By E. NESBIT

A STORY FOR CHILDREN.

CHAPTER VI.

THE KEY OF THE PARLOUR.

ELFRIDA was behind the secret panel, and the panel had shut with a spring. She had come there hoping to find the jewels that had been hidden two hundred years ago by Sir Edward Talbot when he was pretending to be the Chevalier St. George. She had not had time even to look for the jewels before the panel closed, and now that she was alone in the dusty dark, with the door shut between her and the brightly-lit parlour where her brother was, the jewels hardly seemed to matter at all, but what did so dreadfully and very much matter was that closed panel. Edred had tried to open it, and he had fallen off the chair. Well, there had been plenty of time for him to get up again.

"Why don't you open the door?" she called, impatiently. And there was no answer. Behind that panel silence seemed a thousand times more silent than it ever had before. And it was so dark. And Edred had the matches in his pocket.

"Edred! Edred!" she called, suddenly, and very loud. "Why don't you open the door?"

And this time he answered.

"Because I can't reach," he said.

"Get on the chair." Elfrida was trying very hard not to be extremely cross. It *was* rather stupid of Edred, she couldn't help feeling.

"I can't get on the chair," said Edred's voice, growing more melancholy with each word.

"Why not?"

"It's smashed. The arms are off and the back's split. And I tell you my leg's all twisted and hurt in the knickerbocker part."

There was a rather long pause, which Elfrida occupied in reminding herself that one should always try to make the best of things.

"Never mind," she said; "you'll catch it about the chair, though. I shall go up into the little room and wait. I expect it's light there. And if the jewels are there," she added, not quite without malice, "it'll be jolly playing with them. Don't you wish you'd come in when I told you, instead of breaking chairs and getting bumped heads and twisted knickerbockers?"

"*No*," said Edred, most definitely, "I don't. I'd rather be out here."

"Why?"

"There's no knowing how long you'll be shut up there."

"Nonsense," said Elfrida, bravely. "Mrs. Honeysett'll let me out the minute she comes home."

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"She can't get in when she does come home," said Edred's mournful voice. "Don't you remember? We locked the doors."

"Well, go and unlock them, then," Elfrida said, impatiently.

"I can't," said Edred, in tones of increasing despair. "I can't go anywhere."

Elfrida concluded that his leg was seriously injured.

"I say—I am sorry if you're really hurt, old boy," she said. "Never mind, Emily'll come back some time. You can shout to her, and she can get through the parlour window, like Talbot did when he was pretending to be the King."

"No, she can't," was the reply of the wretched Edred; "nor yet I can't get out and go and fetch Emily from the station. There's bars to the window now—don't you remember?"

"Is your leg well enough for you to go and fetch her from the station?"

"Oh, my leg's all right." His tone could not have been more gloomy if both his legs had been all wrong.

"Then why on earth don't you go and unlock the doors and cut down to the station *and* fetch her? Don't be so stupid."

"Because I can't get out of this room. Stupid yourself," was his immediate retort.

"Oh, it is aggravating," cried Elfrida, stamping her foot in the dusty darkness behind the panel, "to be here and not to be able to see anything, or understand what you're talking about. Why can't you get out of the room——?" she pulled herself up on the edge of "Stupid!"

She might as well have said it, for Edred understood.

"It's not me that's the stupid this time," he remarked, with melancholy triumph.

"*Why* can't you get out?" Elfrida shouted.

And Edred, goaded to a louder shout still, replied in it:—

"I can't get out *because you've got the key in your pocket.*"

I feel that I ought to make that the end of the chapter and leave you to wonder till next month how Elfrida got out, and how she liked the not getting out, which certainly looked as though it were going to last longer than anyone could possibly be expected to find pleasant.

But that would make the chapter too short, and there are other reasons. So I will not disguise from you that when Elfrida put her hand to her pocket and felt something there — something hard and heavy — and remembered that she had put the key of the parlour there because it was such a nice safe place, where it couldn't possibly be lost, she uttered what is known as a hollow groan.

"Aha! You see now," said Edred, outside; "you see I'm not so stupid after all."

Elfrida was thinking.

"I say," she called through the panel, "it's no use my standing here. I shall try to feel my way up to the secret chamber. I wish I could remember whether there's a window there or not. If I were you I should just take a book and read till something happens. Mrs. Honeysett's sure to come back some time."

"I can't hear half you say," said Edred, "you do whiffle so."

"Take a book!" shouted his sister. "Read! Mrs. Honeysett — will — come — back—some—time."

So Edred got down a book called "Red Cotton Nightcap Country," which he thought looked interesting, but I don't advise you to try it. And Elfrida, her heart beating rather heavily, put out her hands and felt her way along the passage to the stairs.

"It's all very well," she told herself; "the secret panel is there all right, like it was when I went into the past; but suppose the stairs are gone—or weren't really ever there at all? Or suppose I walked straight into a wall or something? Or perhaps not a *wall*—a *well!*" she suggested to herself, with a sudden thrill of terror, and after that she felt very carefully with each foot in turn before she ventured to put it down in a fresh step.

The boards were soft to tread on, as though they had been carpeted with velvet, and so were the stairs—for there *were* stairs, sure enough. She went up them very slowly and carefully, reaching her hands before her, and at last her hands came against something that seemed like a door. She stroked it gently, feeling for the latch, which she presently found. The door had not been opened for such a very long time that it was not at all inclined to open now. Elfrida had to shove with shoulder and knee, and with all the strength she had. The door gave way—out of politeness I should think, for Elfrida's knee and shoulder strength were all quite small—and there was the room just as she had seen it when the Chevalier St. George stood in it bowing and smiling by the light of one candle in a silver candlestick. Only now Elfrida was alone, and the light was a sort of green twilight that came from a little window over the mantelpiece, that was hung outside with a thick curtain of ivy. If Elfrida had

come out of the sunlight she would have called this a green darkness. But she had been so long in the dark that this shadowy dusk seemed quite light to her. All the same she made haste, when she had shut the door, to drag a chair in front of the fireplace and to get the window open. It opened inwards, and it did not want to open at all. But it also was polite enough to yield to her wishes, and when it had suddenly given way she reached out and broke the ivy leaves off one by one, making more and more daylight in the secret room. She did not let the leaves fall outside, but on the hearthstone, "for," said she, "we don't want outside people to get to know all about the Ardens' secret hiding-place. I'm glad I thought of that. I really *am* rather like a detective in a book."

"SHE SAW THAT THE NAME WAS 'E. TALBOT.'"

When all the leaves were plucked from the window's square and only the brown ivy boughs left, she turned back to the room. The furniture was all powdered heavily with dust, and what had made the floor so soft to walk upon was the thick carpet of dust that lay there.

There was the table on which the Chevalier St. George—no, Sir Edward Talbot—had set the tray. There were the chairs, and there, sure enough, was the corner cupboard in which he had put the jewels. Elfrida got its door open with I don't know what of mingled hopes and fears. It had three shelves, but the jewels were on none of them. In fact, there was nothing on any of them. But on the inside of the door her hand, as she held it open, felt something rough. And when she looked it was a name carved, and when she swung the door well back, so that the light fell full on it, she saw that the name was "E. Talbot." So then she knew that all she had seen in that room previously must have really happened two hundred years before, and was not just a piece of magic Mouldiwarpiness.

She climbed up on the chair again and looked out through the little window. She could see nothing of the castle walls, only the distant shoulder of the downs and the path that cut across it towards the station. She would have liked to see a red figure or a violet one coming along that path. But there was no figure on it.

What do you usually do when you are shut up in a secret room with no chance of getting out for hours? As for me, I always say poetry to myself. It is one of the uses of poetry—one says it to oneself in distressing circumstances of that kind, or when one has to wait at railway stations, or when one cannot get to sleep at night. You will find poetry most useful for this purpose. So learn plenty of it, and be sure it is the best kind, because this is most useful as well as most agreeable.

Elfrida began with "Ruin seize thee, ruthless King," but there were parts of that which she liked best when there were other people about, so she stopped it and began "Horatius and the Bridge." This lasted a long time. Then came "The Favourite Cat Drowned in a Tub of Goldfish," and in the middle of that, quite suddenly and I don't know why, she thought of the Mouldiwarp.

"We didn't quite quarrel," she told herself; "at least, not really, truly quarrel. I might try, anyhow."

So she set to work to make a piece of poetry to call up the Mouldiwarp with. This was how, after a time, the first piece came out:—

The Mouldiwarp of Arden,
  By the nine gods it swore
That Elfrida of Arden
  Should be shut up no more.
By the nine gods it swore it,
And named a convenient time, no doubt,
  And bade its messengers ride forth,
  East and west, south and north,
To let Elfrida out.

But when she said it aloud nothing happened.

"I wonder," said Elfrida, "whether it's because we quarrelled, or because it just says he let me out and doesn't ask him to, or because I had to say 'Elfrida' to make it sound right, or because it's such dreadful nonsense? I'll try again."

She tried again. This time she got:—

Behind the secret panel's lines
The pensive Elfrida reclines,
And wishes she was at home;
At least, I am at home, of course,
But things are getting worse and worse;
Dear mole, come, come, come, come!

She said it aloud, and when she came to the last words there was the white Mouldiwarp sitting on the floor at her feet and looking up at her with eyes that blinked.

"You *are* good to come," Elfrida said.

"Well, what do you want now?" said the mole.

"I—I ought to tell you that I oughtn't to ask you to do anything, but I didn't think you'd come if it really counted as a quarrel. It was only a little one, and we were both sorry quite directly."

"You have a straightforward nature," said the Mouldiwarp. "Well, well, I must say you've got yourself into a nice hole!"

"It would be a *very* nice hole," said Elfrida, eagerly, "if only the panel were open. I wouldn't mind how long I stayed here then. That's funny, isn't it?"

"Yes," said the mole. "Well, if you hadn't quarrelled I could get you into another time—some time when the panel was open—and you could just walk out. You shouldn't quarrel. It makes everything different. It puts dust into the works. It stops the wheels of the clock."

"The clock," said Elfrida, slowly; "couldn't that work backwards?"

"I don't know what you mean," said the mole.

"I don't know that I quite know myself," Elfrida explained; "but the daisy clock. You sit on the second-hand and there isn't any time; and yet there's lots when you're not sitting. If I could sit on the daisy clock the time wouldn't be anything before someone comes to let me out. But I can't get to the daisy clock, even if you'd make it for me. So *that's* no good."

"You are a very clever little girl," said the Mouldiwarp, "and all the clocks in the world aren't made of daisies. Move the tables and chairs back against the wall. We'll see what we can do for you."

While Elfrida was carrying out this order the white mole stood on its hind feet and called out softly in a language she did not understand. Others understood it though, it seemed, for a white pigeon fluttered in through the window, and then another. All the room seemed full of circling wings and gentle cooings, and a shower of soft white feathers fell like snow.

Then the mole was silent, and one by one the white pigeons sailed back through the window into the blue-and-gold world of out of doors.

"Get up on a chair and keep out of the way," said the Mouldiwarp. And Elfrida did.

And then a soft wind blew through the little room—a wind like the wind that breathes softly in walled gardens and shakes down the rose leaves on sparkling summer mornings. And the white feathers on the floor were stirred by the sweet wind, and drifted into little heaps and lines and curves till they made on the dusty floor the circle of a clock face with all its figures, and its long hand and its short hand and its second-hand. And the white mole stood in the middle.

"All white things obey me," it said. "Come, sit down on the minute-hand, and you'll be there in no time."

"Where?" asked Elfrida, getting off the chair.

"Why, at the time when they open the panel. Let me get out of the clock first. And give me the key of the parlour door. It'll save time in the end."

So Elfrida sat down on the minute-hand and instantly it began to move round—faster than you can possibly imagine. And it was very soft to sit on—like a cloud would be if the laws of Nature ever permitted you to sit on clouds. And it spun round so that it seemed no time at all before she found herself sitting on the floor; and heard voices, and knew that the secret panel was open.

"I see," she said, wisely, "it does work backwards, doesn't it?"

But there was no one to answer her, for the Mouldiwarp was gone. And the white pigeons' feathers were in heaps on the floor. She saw them as she stood up. And there wasn't any clock face any more.

Edred soon got tired of "Red Cotton Night-cap Country," which really is not half such good fun as it sounds, even for grown-ups, and he tried several other books. But reading did not seem amusing, somehow. And the house was much too quiet, and the clock outside ticked so much too loud, and Elfrida was shut up. And there were bars to the

"THE ROOM SEEMED FULL OF CIRCLING WINGS."

windows. And the door was locked. He walked about, and sat in each of the chairs in turn, but none of them was comfortable. And his thoughts were not comfortable either. Suppose no one ever came to let them out. Supposing the years rolled on and found him still a prisoner, when he was a white-haired old man, like people in the Bastille or in iron masks? His eyes filled with tears at the thought. Fortunately it did not occur to him that unless someone came pretty soon he would be unlikely to live to a great age, since people cannot live long without eating. If he had thought of this, he would have been even more unhappy than he was—and he was quite unhappy enough. Then he began to wonder if anything had happened to Elfrida. She was dreadfully quiet inside there behind the panel. He wished he had not quarrelled with her. Everything was very miserable. He went to the window and looked out, as Elfrida had done, to see if he could see a red dress or a violet dress coming over the downs. But there was nothing. And the time got longer and longer: drawing itself out like a putty snake when you rub it between your warm hands. And at last—what with misery, and having cried a good deal, and its being long past tea-time—he fell asleep on the window-seat.

He was roused by a hand on his shoulder and a voice calling his name.

Next moment he was in the arms of Aunt Edith, or as much in her arms as he could be with the window-bars between them.

When he had told her where Elfrida was, and where the room key was, which took some time, he began to cry again, for he did not quite see, even now, how he was to be got out.

"Now, don't be a dear silly," said Aunt

Edith. "If we can't get you out any other way, I'll run and fetch a locksmith. But look what I found right in the middle of the path as I came up from the station!"

It was a key; and tied to it was an ivory label, and on the label were marked the words, "Parlour door—Arden."

"You might try it," she said.

He did try it. And it fitted. And he unlocked the parlour door and then the front door, so that Aunt Edith could come in.

And together they got the kitchen steps and found the secret opening and opened the panel, and got out the dusty Elfrida. And then Aunt Edith lighted the kitchen fire and boiled the kettle, and they had tea, which everyone wanted very badly indeed. And Aunt Edith had brought little cakes for tea, with pink icing on them, very soft inside with apricot jam. And she had come to stay over Sunday.

She was as much excited as the children over the secret panel, and after tea (when Edred had fetched Emily back from the wild-goose chase for a parcel at the station, on which she was still engaged) the aunt and the niece and the nephew explored the secret stairs and the secret chamber thoroughly.

"What a wonderful lot of pigeons' feathers!" said Aunt Edith; "they must have been piling up here for years and years."

"It was lucky your finding that key," said Edred. "I wonder who dropped it? Where's the other one, Elf?"

"I don't know," said Elfrida, truthfully. "It isn't in my pocket now."

And though Edred and Aunt Edith searched every corner of the secret hiding-place, they never found that key.

Elfrida alone knows that she gave it to the Mouldiwarp. And as Mrs. Honeysett declared that there had never been a parlour key with a label on it in *her* time, it certainly does seem as though the mole must have put the key he got from Elfrida in the path for Aunt Edith to find, after carefully labelling it to prevent mistakes. How the mole got the label is another question, but I really think that finding a label for a key is quite a simple thing to do—I have done it myself; whereas making a clock face of white pigeon feathers is very difficult indeed, and a thing that I have never been able to do. And as for making that clock face the means of persuading time to go fast or slow, just as one wishes—well, I don't suppose even *you* could do that.

Elfrida found it rather a relief to go back to the ordinary world, where magic moles did not upset the clock, a world made pleasant by nice aunts and the old delightful games that delight ordinary people, games such as "Hunt the Thimble," "What is My Thought Like?" and "Proverbs." The three had a delightful week-end, and Aunt Edith told them all about the lodgers and the seaside house which already seemed very long ago and far away.

On Sunday evening as they walked home from Arden Church, where they had tried to attend to the service and not to look *too* much at the tombs and monuments of dead-and-gone Ardens that lined the chancel, the three sat down on Arden Knoll and Aunt Edith explained things a little to them. She told them much more than they could understand about wills and trustees and incomes, but they were honoured by her confidence, and pleased by the fact that she seemed to think they *could* understand such grown-up happenings. But the thing that remained on their minds after the talk, like a ship cast up by a high tide, was this—that Arden Castle was theirs, and that there was very little money to "keep it up" with, so that everyone must be very careful and no one must be at all extravagant. And Aunt Edith was going back to the world of lawyers and wills and trustees early on Monday morning, and they must be very good children and not bother Mrs. Honeysett, and never, never lock themselves in and hide the key in safe places.

All this remained as the lasting result of that pleasant talk on the downs in that softening, lessening light. And another thing remained which Edred put into words as the two children walked back from the station, where they had seen Aunt Edith into the train and waved their good-byes to her.

"It is very important indeed," he said, "for us to find the treasure. Then we could 'keep up' the castle without any bother. We must have it built up again first, of course, and then we'll *keep* it up. And we won't have any old clocks and not keeping together, this time. We'll both of us go and find the attic the minute our quarrel's three days old, and we'll ask the Mouldiwarp to send us to a time when we can really *see* the treasure with our own eyes. I do think that's a good idea, don't you?" he asked, with modest pride.

"Very," Elfrida said; "and I say, Edred, I don't mean to quarrel any more, if I can help it. It is such a waste of time," she added, in her best grown-up manner, "and it does delay everything so. Delays are dangerous, it says in the 'Proverbs' game. Suppose there really was a chance of *getting*

the treasure, and we had to wait three days because of quarrelling? But I'll tell you one thing I found out. You can get the mole to come and help you if ever you have quarrelled a little. Because I did." And she told him how.

"But I expect," she added, "it would only come if you were in the most awful trouble and all human aid despaired of."

"Well, we're not that now," said Edred, knocking the head off a poppy with his stick. "And I'm jolly glad we're not."

"I wonder," said Elfrida, "who lives in that cottage where the witch was? I know exactly where it is. I expect it's been pulled down, though. Let's go round that way. It'll be something to do."

So they went round that way, and the way was quite easy to find. But when they got to the place where the tumble-down cottage had been in Boney's time, there was only a little slate-roofed house with a blue bill pasted up on its yellow-brick face, saying that somebody's A1 Ginger Beer and Up-to-Date Minerals were sold there. The house was dull to look at, and they did not happen to have any spare money for ginger beer. So they turned round to go home, and suddenly found themselves face to face with a woman. She wore a red and black plaid blouse and a bought-ready-made black skirt, and on her head was a man's peaked cap such as women in the country wear now, instead of the pretty sunbonnets that they used to wear when I was a little girl.

"So they've pulled the old cottage down," she said; "this new house'll be fine and dry inside, I lay. The rain comed in through the roof of the old one, so's ye might a'most as well be laying in the open medder."

The children listened politely, and both were wondering where they had seen this woman before, for her face was strangely familiar to them, and yet they didn't seem really to know her, either.

"Most of the cottages 'bout here is just as bad as they always was," she went on. "When Arden has the handling of the treasure he'll see to it that poor folks lie warm and dry, won't he now?"

And then, all in a minute, the children both knew, and she knew that they knew.

"Why," said Edred, "you're the——"

"Yes," she said, "I'm the witch, come from old, ancient times. If you can go back, I can go forth; because then and now's the same if you know how to make a clock."

"Can you make clocks?" said Elfrida. "I thought it was only——"

"So it be," said the witch. "I can't make 'em, but I know them as can. And I've come 'ere to find you, 'cause you brought me the tea and sugar. I've got the wise eye, I have. I can see back and forth. I looked forward and I saw ye—and I looked back and I saw what you're seeking, and I know where the treasure is, and——"

"But where did you get these clothes?" Edred asked; and it was a question he was afterwards to have reason to regret.

"Oh, clothes is easy come by," said the witch; "if it was only clothes I could be a crowned queen this very minute."

The children had a fleeting impression of seeing against the criss-cross fence of the potato-field a lady in crimson and ermine with a gold crown. They blinked, startled—and saw that there was no crimson and gold, only the dull clothes of the witch against the background of potato-patch.

"And how did you get here?" Edred asked.

"That speckled hen of mine's a-settin' on the clock face now," she said. "I quieted her with a chalk line drawn from her beak's end straight out into the world of wonders. If she rouses up, then I'm back there; and I can't never come back here, my dears, not more than once, I can't. So let's make haste down to the castle, and I'll show you where my great-granny see them put the treasure when she was a little gell."

The three hurried down the steep-banked lane.

"Many's the time," the witch went on, "my granny pointed it out to me. It's just alongside where——"

And then the witch was not there any more. Edred and Elfrida were alone in the lane. The speckled hen must have recovered from her "quieting" and got off the clock.

"She's gone right enough," said Edred, "and now we'll never know. And just when she was going to tell us where it was. I do think it's too jolly stupid for anything."

"It's *you* that's too jolly stupid for anything," said Elfrida, hotly. "What did you want to go asking her about her silly clothes for? It was *that* did it. She'd have told us where it was before now if you hadn't taken her time up with clothes. As if *clothes* mattered. I do wish to goodness you'd *sometimes* try to behave as if you'd got some sense."

"Go it!" said Edred, bitterly. "As if everything wasn't tiresome enough! Now there's another three days to wait, because of your nagging. Oh, it's just exactly like a girl, so it is."

"A LADY IN CRIMSON AND ERMINE WITH A GOLD CROWN."

"I'm — I'm sorry," said Elfrida, awe-stricken. "Let's do something good to make up. I'll give you that note-book of mine with the lead-pointed mother-of-pearl pencil, and we'll go round the cottages and find out which are leaky, so as to be ready to patch them up when we've got the treasure."

"I don't *want* to be good," said Edred, bitterly. "*I* haven't quarrelled and put everything back. But I'm going to now," he said, with determination. "I don't see why everything should be smashed up and me not said any of the things I want to say."

"Oh, *don't!*" cried Elfrida; "it's bad enough to quarrel when you don't want to, but to *set out* to quarrel—don't!"

Edred didn't. He kicked the dust up with his boots, and the two went back to the castle in gloomy silence.

At the gate Edred paused. "I'll make it up now if you like," he said. "I've only just thought of it—but perhaps it's three days from the *end* of the quarrel."

"I see," said Elfrida; "so the longer we keep it up——"

"Yes," said Edred; "so let's call it Pax, and not waste any *more* time."

(*To be continued.*)

By E. NESBIT.

A STORY FOR CHILDREN.

CHAPTER VII.

GUY FAWKES.

THREE days, because there had been a quarrel. But days pass quickly when the sun shines, and it is holiday time, and you have a big ruined castle to explore and examine—a castle that is your own—or your brother's.

"After all," said Elfrida, sensibly, "we might quite likely find the treasure ourselves, without any magic mouldiwarpiness at all. We'll look thoroughly. We won't leave a stone unturned."

So they climbed the steep, worn stairs that wound round and round in the darkness—stairs littered with dead leaves and mould and dropped feathers and the dry, deserted nests of owls and jackdaws.

Then there were arched doors that led to colonnades with strong little pillars and narrow windows, wonderful little unexpected chambers and corners—the best place in the whole wide world for serious and energetic hide-and-seek.

"I've got an idea," said Edred, "if we could get back to where the castle was all perfect like a model and draw pictures of every part. Then when we found the treasure we should know exactly what to build it up like, shouldn't we?"

"Yes," she said, "let's begin now——"

"And you'll have to lend me one of your pencils," said he, "because I broke mine all to bits trying to get the parlour door open the day you'd got the key in your pocket."

So they got large sheets of writing paper, and brown calf bound books for the paper to lie flat on, and they started to draw Arden Castle. And as Elfrida tried to draw everything she knew was there, as well as everything she could see, her drawing soon became almost entirely covered with black-lead.

"Oh," cried Edred, jumping up and dropping his masterpiece and the calf-bound volume and the pencil, "*I* know. The Brownie!"

"The Brownie?"

"Yes—take it with us. "Then we could photograph the castle all perfect."

This intelligent idea commanded Elfrida's respect, and she wished she had thought of it herself. So she said:—

"You're getting quite clever, aren't you?"

"Aha," said Edred, "you'd like to have thought of that yourself, wouldn't you? I can be clever sometimes, same as you can."

It is very annoying to have our thoughts read. Elfrida said, swiftly, "Not often you can't," and then stopped short. In a moment the children stood looking at each other with a very peculiar expression. Then a sigh of relief broke from each.

"Fielded!" said Edred.

"Just in time!" said Elfrida. "It wasn't a quarrel; nobody could say it was a quarrel. Come on, let's go and look at the cottages, like the witch told us to."

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They went. They made a tour of inspection that day, and the next and the next. And they saw a great many things that a grown-up inspector would never have seen. Poor people are very friendly and kind to you when you are a child. They will let you come into their houses, and talk to you and show you things in a way that they would never condescend to do with your grown-up relations. This is, of course, if you are a really nice child, and treat them in a respectful and friendly way.

And when they weren't visiting the cottages or exploring the castle they found a joyous way of passing the time in the reading aloud of the history of Arden. They took it in turns to read aloud. Elfrida looked carefully for some mention of Sir Edward Talbot and his pretending to be the Chevalier St. George. There was none, but a Sir Edward Talbot had been accused, with the Lord Arden of the time, of plotting against His Most Christian Majesty King James I.

"I wonder if he was like my Edward Talbot?" said Elfrida. "I would like to see him again. I wish I'd told him about us having been born so many years after he died. But it would have been difficult to explain, wouldn't it? Let's look in Green's History Book and see what they looked like when it was His Most Christian Majesty King James the First."

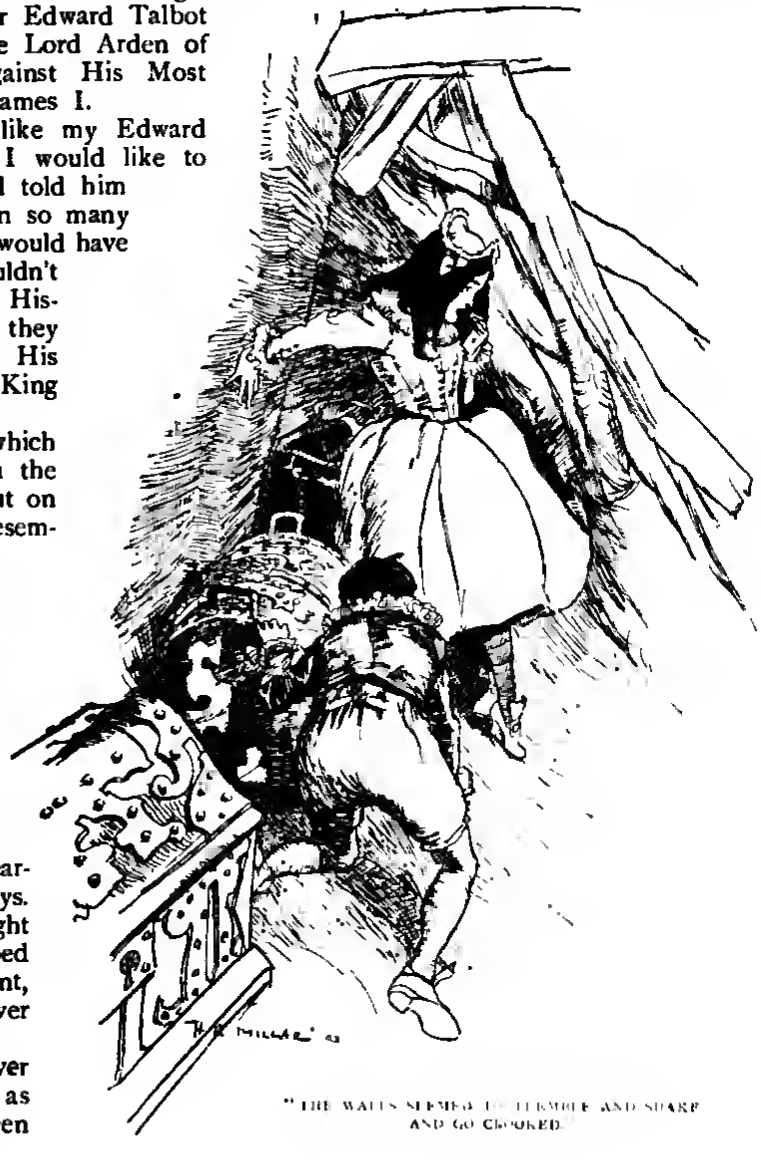
Perhaps it was this which decided the children, when the three days were over, to put on the clothes which most resembled the ones in the pictures of James I.'s time in Green's History.

Edred had full breeches, puffed out like balloons, and a steeple-crowned hat, and a sort of tunic of crimson velvet, and a big starched ruff round his little neck more uncomfortable even than your Eton collar is after you've been wearing flannels for days and days. And Elfrida had long, tight stays with a large, flat-shaped piece of wood down the front, and very full long skirts over a very abrupt hoop.

When the three days were over the door of the attic, which, as usual after a quarrel, had been quite invisible and impossible to find, had become as plain as the nose on the face of the plainest person you know, and the children had walked in, and looked in the chests till they found what they wanted.

While they were dressing Elfrida held the Brownie camera tightly, in one hand or the other. This made dressing rather slow and difficult, but the children had agreed that if it were not done the Brownie would be, as Edred put it, "liable to vanish," as everything else belonging to their own time always did —except their clothes. I can't explain to you just now how it was that their clothes *didn't* vanish. It would take too long.

And now a very odd thing happened. As Edred put on his second shoe—which was the last touch to their united toilets—the



"THE WALLS SEEMED TO TREMBLE AND SHAKE AND GO CROOKED."

walls seemed to tremble and shake and go crooked, like a house of cards at the very instant before it topples down. The floor slanted to that degree that standing on it was so difficult as to be at last impossible. The rafters all seemed to get crooked and mixed like a box of matches when you spill them on the floor. The tiled roof that showed blue daylight through seemed to spin like a top, and you could not tell at all which way up you were. All this happened with dreadful suddenness, but almost as soon as it had begun it stopped with a jerk like that of a clockwork engine that has gone wrong. And the attic was gone—and the chests, and the blue-chinked tiles of the roof, and the walls and the rafters. And the room had shrunk to less than half its old size. And it was higher, and it was not an attic any more, but a round room with narrow windows, and just such a fireplace, with a stone hood, as the ones the children had seen when they looked down from the tops of the towers.

"*I* see," said Edred, when breath enough for speech had returned to him. "This is the place where the attic was after the tower fell to pieces."

"But there isn't any attic, really," said Elfrida. "You know we can't find it if we've quarrelled, and Mrs. Honeysett doesn't ever find it. It isn't anywhere."

"Yes, it is," said Edred. "We couldn't find it if it wasn't."

"Well," said Elfrida, gloomily, "I only hope we *may* find it, that's all. I suppose we may as well go out. It's no use sticking in this horrid little room." Her hand was on the door, but even as she fumbled with the latch, which was of iron and of a shape to which she was wholly unaccustomed, something else happened, even more disconcerting than the turn-over-change in which the attic and the chests had disappeared. It is very difficult to describe. Perhaps you happen to dislike travelling in trains with your back to the engine? If you do dislike it you dislike it very much indeed.

The sensations which now held Edred and Elfrida were exactly those which—if you don't like travelling backwards—you know only too well—and the sensations were so acute that both children shut their eyes. When the two children opened their eyes it was in a room which Edred at least had never seen before. To Elfrida it seemed strange yet familiar. The shape of the room, the position of doors and windows, the mantelpiece with its curious carvings—these she knew. And some of the furniture, too. Yet the room seemed bare—barer than it should have been. But why should it look bare—barer than it should have been—unless she knew how much less bare it once was? Unless, in fact, she had seen it before?

"Oh, I know," she cried, standing in her stiff skirts and heavy shoes in the middle of the room. "I know. This is Lord Arden's town house. This is where I was with Cousin Betty. Only there aren't such nice chairs and things, and it was full of people then."

Edred remained silent, his mouth half open and his eyes half shut in a sort of trance of astonishment.

"I don't like it," he began. "Let's go back. I don't like it. And we didn't take the photograph. And I don't like it. And my clothes are horrid. I feel something between a balloon and a Bluecoat boy. And you've no idea how silly you look—like Mrs. Noah out of the Ark, only tubby. And I don't know who we're supposed to be. And I don't suppose this is Arden House. And if it is, you don't know *when*. Suppose it's Inquisition times, and they put us on the stake? Let's go back; I don't like it," he ended.

"Now you just listen," said Elfrida, knitting her brows under the queer cap she wore. "I know inside me what I mean, but *you* won't unless you jolly well attend."

"Fire ahead."

"Well, then, even if it was Inquisition times it would be all right—for us."

"How do you know?"

"I don't know how I know, but I know I *do* know," said Elfrida, firmly. "You see, *I've* been here before. It's not real, you see."

"It *is*," said Edred, kicking the leg of the table.

Elfrida frowned. Afterwards she was glad that she had done no more than frown. It is dangerous, as you know, to quarrel in a boat, but far more dangerous to quarrel in a century that is not your own. She frowned and opened her mouth. And just as her mouth opened the door of the room followed its example, and a short, dark, cross-looking woman in a crimson skirt and strange cap came hurrying in.

"So it's here you've hidden yourselves!" she cried. "And I looking high and low to change your dress."

"What for?" said Edred, for it was his arm which she had quite ungently caught.

"For what?" she said, as she dragged him

out of the room. "Why, to attend my lord your father and your lady mother at the masque at Whitehall. Had you forgot already? And thou so desirous to attend them in thy new white velvet broidered with the orange-tawny, and thy lady mother's diamond buckles, and the silken cloak and the shoe-roses, and the cobweb-lawn starched ruff, and the little sword, and all"

The woman had dragged Edred out of the room and up the stairs by this time Elfrida following, decided that her speech was the harshest part of her.

"If she was really horrid," thought the girl, "she wouldn't try to cheer him up with velvet and swords and diamond buckles"

"Can't *I* go?" she said, aloud.

The woman turned and slapped her—not hard, but smartly. "I told thee how it would be if thou wouldst not hold that dunning tongue. No; thou can't go. Little ladies stay at home and sew their samplers. Thou'lt go to Court soon enough, I warrant."

So Elfrida sat and watched while Edred was partially washed—the soap got in his eyes just as it gets in yours nowadays—and dressed in the beautiful white page's dress, white velvet, diamond buckles, little sword, and all.

"You are splendid," she said. "Oh, I do wish I was a boy," she added, for perhaps the two thousand and thirty-second time in her short life.

"It's not that you'll be wishing when *your* time comes to go to Court," said the woman. "There, my little lord, give thy old nurse a kiss and stand very cautious and perfect, not to soil thy fine feathers. And when thou hearest thy mother's robes on the stairs go out and make thy bow like thy tutor taught thee."

It was not Edred's tutor who had taught him to bow. But when a rustling of silks sounded on the stairs he was able to go out and make a very creditable obeisance to the stately magnificence that swept down towards him. Elfrida thought it best to curtsy beside her brother. Aunt Edith had taught them to dance the minuet, and somehow the bow and curtsy which belong to that dance seemed the right thing now. And the lady on the stairs smiled, well pleased. She was a wonderfully-dressed lady. Her bodice was of yellow satin, richly embroidered; her petticoat of gold tissue, with stripes; her robe of red velvet, lined with yellow muslin with stripes of pure gold. She had a point lace apron and a collar of white satin under a delicately-worked ruff. And she was a blaze of beautiful jewels.

"Thou'rt a fine page, indeed, my dear son," said the lady. "Stand aside and take my train as I pass. And thou, dear daughter, so soon as thou'rt of an age for it, thou shalt have a train and a page to carry it."

She swept on, and the children followed. Lord Arden was in the hall, hardly less splendid than his wife, and they all went off in a coach that was very grand, if rather clumsy Its shape reminded Elfrida of the coach which the fairy-godmother made for Cinderella out of the pumpkin, and she herself, as she peeped through the crowd of liveried servants to see it start, felt as

"'THOU'RT A FINE PAGE, INDEED, MY DEAR SON,' SAID THE LADY. 'STAND ASIDE AND TAKE MY TRAIN.'"

much like Cinderella as anyone need wish to feel, and perhaps a little more. But she consoled herself by encouraging a secret feeling she had that something was bound to happen, and sure enough something did. And that is what I am going tn tell you about. I own that I should like to tell you also what happened to Edred, but his part of the adventure was not really an adventure at all—though it was a thing that he will never forget as long as he remembers any magic happenings.

"We went to the King's house," he told Elfrida later. "Whitehall is the name. I should like to call my house Whitehall—if it wasn't called Arden Castle, you know. And there were thousands of servants, I should think, all much finer than you could dream of, and lords and ladies, and lots of things to eat, and bear-baiting and cock-fighting in the garden."

"Cruel!" said Elfrida. "I hope you didn't look."

"A little I did," said Edred. "Boys have to be brave to bear sights of blood and horror, you know, in case of them growing up to be soldiers. But I liked the masque best. The Queen acted in it. There wasn't any talking, you know, only dressing up and dancing. It was something like the pantomime, but not so sparkly. And there was a sea with waves that moved all silvery, and panelled scenes, and dolphins and fishy things, and a great shell that opened, and the Queen and the ladies came out and danced, and I had a lot to eat, such rummy things, and then I fell asleep, and when I woke up the King himself was looking at me and saying I had a bonny face. Bonny means pretty. You'd think a King would know better, wouldn't you?"

This was all that Edred could find to tell. I could have told more, but one can't tell everything, and there is Elfrida's adventure to be told about.

When the coach had disappeared in the mist and the mud—for the weather was anything but summer weather—Elfrida went upstairs again to the room where she had left the old nurse. She did not know where else to go.

"Sit you down," said the nurse, "and sew on your sampler."

There was the sampler, very fine indeed, in a large polished wood frame.

"I wish I needn't," said Elfrida, looking anxiously at the fine silks.

"Tut, tut," said the nurse; "how'll thee grow to be a lady if thou doesn't mind thy needle?"

"I'd much rather talk to you," said Elfrida, coaxingly.

"Thou canst chatter as well as sew," the nurse said, "as well I know to my cost. Would that thy needle flew so fast as thy tongue! Sit thee down, and if the little tree be done by dinner-time thou shalt have leave to see thy Cousin Richard."

"I suppose," thought Elfrida, taking up the needle, "that I am fond of my Cousin Richard."

The sewing was difficult, and hurt her eyes—but she persevered. Presently someone called the nurse and Elfrida was left alone. Then she stopped persevering. "Whatever *is* the good," she asked herself, "of working at a sampler that you haven't time to finish, and that would be worn out, anyhow, years and years before you were born? The Elfrida who's doing that sampler is the same age as me, and born the same day," she reflected. And then she wondered what the date was, and what was the year. She was still wondering, and sticking the needle idly in and out of one hole, without letting it take the silk with it, when there was a sort of clatter on the stairs, the door burst open, and in came a jolly boy of about her own age.

"Thy task done?" he cried. "Mine too. Old Parrot-nose kept me hard at it, but I thought of thee, and for once I did all his biddings. So now we are free. Come play ball in the garden." This, Elfrida concluded, must be Cousin Dick, and she decided at once that she *was* fond of him.

There was a big and beautiful garden behind the house. The children played ball there, and they ran in the box alleys, and played hide-and-seek among the cut trees and stone seats, and statues and fountains.

Old Parrot-nose, who was Cousin Richard's tutor, and was dressed in black, and looked as though he had been eating lemons and vinegar, sat on a seat and watched them, or walked up and down the flagged terrace with his thumb in a dull-looking book.

When they stopped their game to rest on a stone step, leaning against a stone seat, old Parrot-nose walked very softly up behind the seat, and stood there where they could not see him and listened. Listening is very dishonourable, as we all know, but in those days tutors did not always think it necessary to behave honourably to their pupils.

I always have thought, and I always shall think, that it was the eavesdropping of that tiresome old tutor, Mr. Parados, or Parrot-nose, which caused all the mischief. But Elfrida has always believed, and always will

believe, that the disaster was caused by her knowing too much history. That is why she is so careful to make sure that no misfortune shall ever happen on *that* account, any way. That is one of the reasons why she never takes a history prize at school. "You never know," she says. And, in fact, when it comes to a question in an historical examination, she never *does* know.

This was how it happened. Elfrida, now that she was no longer running about in the garden, remembered the question that she had been asking herself over the embroidery frame, and it now seemed sensible to ask the question of someone who could answer it. So she said:—

"I say, Cousin Richard, what year is——" (Elfrida, to show off her history, tells about Gunpowder Plot. The tutor listens, and gets all the names of conspirators that she can remember.) "I say, Cousin Richard, what day is it?"

Elfrida understood him to say that it was the fifth of November.

"Is it really?" she said. "Then it's Guy Fawkes day. Do you have fireworks?" And in pure lightness of heart began to hum:—

Please to remember
The Fifth of November
The gunpowder treason and plot.
I see no reason
Why gunpowder treason
Should ever be forgot.

"'Tis not a merry song, cousin," said Cousin Richard, "nor a safe one. 'Tis best not to sing of treason."

"But it didn't come off, you know, and he's always burnt in the end," said Elfrida.

"Are there more verses?" Cousin Dick asked.

"No."

"I wonder what treason the ballad deals with?" said the boy.

"Don't you know?" It was then that Elfrida made the mistake of showing off her historical knowledge. "*I* know. And I know some of the names of the conspirators, too, and who they wanted to kill, and everything."

"Tell me," said Cousin Richard, idly.

"The King hadn't been fair to the Catholics, you know," said Elfrida, full of importance, "so a lot of them decided to kill him and the Houses of Parliament. They made a plot—there were a whole lot of them in it. They said Lord Arden was, but he wasn't, and some of them were to pretend to be hunting, and to seize the Princess Elizabeth and proclaim her Queen, and the rest were to blow the Houses of Parliament up when the King went to open them."

"I never heard this tale from my tutor," said Cousin Richard. "Proceed, cousin."

"Well, Mr. Piercy took a house next the Parliament House, and they dug a secret passage to the vaults under the Parliament Houses; and they put three dozen casks of gunpowder there and covered them with faggots. And they would have been all blown up, only Mr. Tresham wrote to his relation, Lord Monteagle, that they were going to blow up the King and——"

"What King?" said Cousin Richard.

"King James the First," said Elfrida "Why—what——" for Cousin Richard had sprung to his feet, and old Parrot-nose had Elfrida by the wrist.

He sat down on the seat and drew her gently till she stood in front of him—gently, but it was like the hand of iron in the velvet glove (of which, no doubt, you have often read).

"Now, Mistress Arden," he said, softly, "tell me over again this romance that you tell your cousin."

Elfrida told it.

"And where did you hear this pretty story?" he asked.

"Where are we now?" gasped Elfrida, who was beginning to understand.

"Here, in the garden—where else?" said Cousin Richard, who understood nothing of the matter.

"Here—in my custody," said the tutor, who thought he understood everything "Now tell me all—every name, every particular—or it will be the worse for thee and thy father."

"Come, sir," said Cousin Richard, "you frighten my cousin. It is but a tale she told. She is always merry, and full of many inventions."

"It is a tale she shall tell again before those of higher power than I," said the tutor, in a thoroughly disagreeable way, and his hand tightened on Elfrida's wrist.

"But—but—it's *history*," cried Elfrida, in despair. "It's in all the books."

"Which books?" he asked, keenly.

"I don't know—all of them," she sullenly answered; sullenly, because she now really did understand just the sort of adventure in which her unusual knowledge of history, and, to do her justice, her almost equally unusual desire to show off, had landed her.

"Now," said the hateful tutor, for such Elfrida felt him to be, "tell me the names of the conspirators."

"OLD PARROT-NOSE HAD ELFRIDA BY THE WRIST."

"It *can't* do any harm," Elfrida told herself. "This is James the First's time, and I'm in it. But it's three hundred years ago all the same, and it all *has* happened, and it can't make any difference what I say, so I'd better tell all the names I know."

The hateful tutor shook her.

"Yes, all right," she said; and to herself she added, "It's only a sort of dream; I may as well tell." Yet when she opened her mouth to tell all the names she could remember of the conspirators of the poor old Gunpowder Plot that didn't come off, all those years ago, she found herself not telling those names at all. Instead, she found herself saying:—

"I'm not going to tell. I don't care what you do to me. I'm sorry I said anything about it. It's all nonsense—I mean, it's only history, and you ought to be ashamed of yourself, listening behind doors—I mean, out of doors behind stone seats, when people are talking nonsense to their own cousins."

Elfrida does not remember very exactly what happened after this. She was furiously angry, and when you are furiously angry things get mixed and tangled up in a sort of dreadful red mist. She only remembers that the tutor was very horrid, and twisted her wrists to make her tell, and she screamed and tried to kick him; that Cousin Richard, who did not scream, did, on the other hand, succeed in kicking the tutor; that she was dragged indoors and shut up in a room without a window, so that it was quite dark.

"If only I'd got Edred here," she said to herself, with tears of rage and mortification, "I'd try to make some poetry and get the Mouldiwarp to come and fetch us away. But it's no use till he comes home."

When he did come home—after the bear-baiting and the cock-fighting and the banquet and the masque—Lord and Lady Arden came with him, of course. And they found their house occupied by an armed guard, and in the dark little room a pale child exhausted with weeping, who assured them again and again that it was all nonsense, it was only history, and she hadn't meant to tell—indeed she hadn't. Lady Arden took her in her arms and held her close and tenderly, in spite of the grand red velvet and the jewels.

"Thou'st done no harm," said Lord Arden—"a pack of silly tales. To-morrow I'll see my Lord Salisbury and prick this silly bubble. Go thou to bed, sweetheart," he said to his wife, "and let the little maid lie with thee—she is all a-tremble with tears and terrors. To-morrow my Lord Secretary shall teach these popinjays their place, and Arden House shall be empty of them, and we shall laugh at this fine piece of work that a solemn marplot has made out of a name or two and a young child's fancies. By to-morrow night

"THEY FOUND THEIR HOUSE OCCUPIED BY AN ARMED GUARD."

all will be well, and we shall lie down in peace."

But when to-morrow night came it had, as all nights have, the day's work behind it. Lord Arden and his lady and the little children lay, not in Arden House in Soho, not in Arden Castle on the downs by the sea, but in the Tower of London, charged with high treason and awaiting their trial.

For my Lord Salisbury had gone to those vaults under the Houses of Parliament and had found that bold soldier of fortune, Guy Fawkes, with his dark eyes, his dark lantern, and his dark intent; and the names of those in the conspiracy had been given up, and King James was saved, and the Parliaments —but the Catholic gentlemen whom he had deceived, and who had turned against him and his deceits, were face to face with the rack and the scaffold.

And I can't explain it at all—because, of course, Elfrida knew as well as I do that it all happened three hundred years ago—or, if you prefer to put it that way, that it had never happened, and that, anyway, it was Mr. Tresham's letter to Lord Monteagle, and not Elfrida's singing of that silly rhyme, that had brought the Ardens and all these other gentlemen to the Tower and to the shadow of death. And yet she felt that it was *she* who had betrayed them. That they were traitors to King and Parliament made no manner of difference. It was she, as she felt but too bitterly, who was the traitor. And in the thick-walled room in the Tower, where the name of Raleigh was still fresh in its carving, Elfrida lay awake, long after Lady Arden and Edred were sleeping peaceful, and hated herself, calling herself a Traitor, a Coward, and an Utter Duffer.

(To be continued.)

The House of Arden

By E. NESBIT.

A STORY
FOR CHILDREN.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE PRISONERS IN THE TOWER.

IMPRISONED in the Tower of London, accused of high treason, and having confessed to a too intimate knowledge of the Gunpowder Plot, Elfrida could not help feeling that it would be nice to be back again in her own time and at Arden, where, if you left events alone and didn't interfere with them by any sort of magic mouldiwarpiness, nothing dangerous, romantic, or thrilling would ever happen. And yet, when she *was* there, as you know, she never could let events alone. She and Edred could not be content with that castle and that house which, even as they stood, would have made you and me so perfectly happy. They wanted the treasure, and they—Elfrida especially—wanted adventures. Well, now they had got an adventure, both of them. There was no knowing how it would turn out, either; and that, after all, is the essence of adventures. Edred was lodged with Lord Arden and several other gentlemen in the White Tower, and Elfrida and Lady Arden were in quite a different part of the building. And the children were not allowed to meet. This, of course, made it impossible for either of them to try to get back to their own times. For though they sometimes quarrelled, as you know, they were really fond of each other, and most of us would hesitate to leave even a person we were *not* very fond of alone a prisoner in the Tower in the time of James I. and the Gunpowder Plot.

Elfrida had to wait on her mother and to sew at the sampler, which had been thoughtfully brought by the old nurse with her lady's clothes and the clothes Elfrida wore. But there were no games, and the only out-of-doors Elfrida could get was on a very narrow terrace, where you could see the fat, queer-

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looking ships in the river and the spire of St. Paul's.

Edred was more fortunate. He was allowed to play in the garden of the Lieutenant of the Tower. But he did not feel much like playing. He wanted to find Elfrida and get back to Arden. Everyone was very kind to him, but he had to be very much quieter than he was used to being, and to say "Sir" and "Madam," and not to speak till he was spoken to.

One day—for they were there quite a number of days—Edred met someone who seemed to like answering questions, and this made more difference than perhaps you would think.

Edred was walking one bright winter day in the private garden of the Lieutenant of the Tower, and he saw coming towards him a very handsome old gentleman dressed in very handsome clothes, and, what is more, the clothes blazed with jewels. Now most of the gentlemen who were prisoners in the Tower at that time thought that their very oldest clothes were good enough to wear in prison; so this splendour that was coming across the garden was very unusual as well as very dazzling, and before Edred could remember the rules about not speaking till you're spoken to he found that he had suddenly bowed and said:—

"Your servant, sir"; adding, "You do look ripping!"

"I do not take your meaning," said the gentleman, but he smiled kindly.

"I mean how splendid you look."

The old gentleman looked pleased.

"I am happy to command your admiration," he said.

"I mean your clothes," said Edred, and then, feeling, with a shock, that this was not the way to behave, he added: "Your face is splendid, too; only I've been taught manners, and I know you mustn't tell people they're handsome to their faces. Praise to the face is open disgrace. Mrs. Honeysett says so."

"Praise to *my* face isn't open disgrace, said the gentleman. "It is a pleasant novelty in these walls."

"Is it your birthday or anything?" Edred asked.

"It is not my birthday," said the gentleman, smiling. "But why the question?"

"Because you're so grand," said Edred. "I suppose you're a prince, then?"

"No, not a prince—a prisoner."

"Oh, I see," said Edred, as people so often do when they don't; "and you're going to be let out to-day, and you've put on your best things to go home in. I *am* so glad. At least, I am sorry you're going, but I'm glad on your account."

"Thou'rt a fine bold boy," said the gentleman; "but no, I am a prisoner, and like to remain so. And for these gauds"—he swelled out his chest so that his diamond buttons and ruby earrings and gem-set collar flashed in the winter sun—"for these gauds never shall it be said that Walter Raleigh let the shadow of his prison tarnish his pride in the proper arraying of a body that has been honoured to kneel before the Virgin Queen." He took off his hat at the last words and swept it with a flourish nearly to the ground.

"*Oh!*" cried Edred, "are you really Sir Walter Raleigh? Oh, how splendid! And now you will tell me all about the golden South Americas, and sea-fights, and the Armada, and the Spaniards, and what you used to play at when you were a little boy."

"Aye," said Sir Walter, "I'll tell thee tales enow. They'll not let me from speaking with thee, I warrant. I would," he said, looking round impatiently, "that I could see the river again. From my late chamber I saw it, and the goodly ships coming in and out—the ships that go down into the great waters." He sighed, was silent a moment, and then spoke. "And so thou didst not know thine old friend Raleigh? He was all forgot, all forgot! And yet thou hast rid astride my sword ere now, and I have played with thee in the court-yard at Arden. When England forgets so soon, who can expect more from a child?"

"I'm sorry," said Edred, humbly.

"Nay," said Sir Walter, pinching his ear gently, "'tis two years agone, and short years have short memories. Thou shalt come with me to my chamber and I will show thee a chart and a map of Windangocoa, that Her Dear Glorious Majesty permitted me to rename Virginia, after her great and gracious self."

So Edred, very glad and proud, went hand in hand with Sir Walter Raleigh to his apartments, and saw many strange things from overseas—dresses of feathers from Mexico, and strange images in gold from strange islands, and the tip of a narwhal's horn from Greenland, with many other things. And Sir Walter told him of his voyages and his fights, and of how he and Humphrey Gilbert, and Adrian Gilbert and little Jack Davis, used to sail their toy boats in the Long Stream; and how they used to row in and out among the big ships down at the

"HE TOOK OFF HIS HAT AT THE LAST WORDS AND SWEPT IT WITH A FLOURISH NEARLY TO THE GROUND."

port, and look at the great figure-heads standing out high above the water, and wonder about them, and about the strange lands they came from.

"And often," said Sir Walter, "we found a sea-captain that would tell us lads travellers' tales like these I have told thee. And we sailed our little ships, and then we sailed our big ships—and here I lie in dock, and shall never sail again. But it's oh to see the Devon moors and the clear reaches of the Long Stream again! And that I never shall."

"Oh, do cheer up, do!" said Edred, awkwardly. "I don't know whether they'll let you go to Devonshire, but I know they'll let you go back to America some day with twelve ships. I read about it only yesterday, and your ship will he called the *Destiny*, and you'll sail from the Thames, and Lord Arden will see you off and kiss you farewell, and give you a medal for a keepsake. Your son will go with you. I *know* it's true. It's all in the book."

"The book?" Sir Walter asked; "a prophecy, belike?"

"You can call it that if you want to," said Ederd, cautiously; "but, anyhow, it's true."

He had read it all in the history of Arden.

"If it should be true," said Sir Walter — and the smile came back to his merry eyes—"and if I ever sail to the Golden West again, shrew me but I will sack a Spanish town, and bring thee a collar of gold and pieces of eight — a big bagful."

"Thank you very much," said Edred. "It is very kind of you; but I shall not be there."

And all Sir Walter's questions did not make him say how he knew this, or what he meant by it.

After this he met Sir Walter every day in the Lieutenant's garden, and the two prisoners comforted each other. At least, Edred was comforted, and Sir Walter *seemed* to be.

However, just now Elfrida and Edred were in the Tower and not able to see each other —so they could not discuss that or any other question, and they always hoped that they would meet, but they never did.

But by and by the Queen thought of Lady Arden and decided that she and her son Edred ought to be let out of the Tower, and she told the King so, and he told Lord Somebody or other, who told the Lieutenant of the Tower, and behold Lady Arden and Edred were abruptly sent home in their own coach, which had been suddenly sent for, to Arden House—but Elfrida was

left in charge of the wife of the Lieutenant of the Tower, who was a very kind lady. So now Elfrida was in the Tower and Edred was at Arden House in Soho, and they had not been able to speak to each other or arrange any plan for getting back to 1908 and Arden Castle by the sea.

Of course, Elfrida was kept in the Tower because she had sung the rhyme about—

> Please to remember
> The Fifth of November,
> The gunpowder treason and plot.

And this made people think—or seem to think—that she knew all about the Gunpowder Plot. And so, of course, she did, though it would have been very difficult for her to show anyone at that time *how* she knew it without being a traitor.

She was now allowed to see Lord Arden every day, and she grew very fond of him. He was curiously like her own daddy, who had gone away to South America with Uncle Jim, and had never come back to his little girl. Lord Arden also seemed to grow fonder of her every day. "Thou'rt a bold piece," he'd tell her, "and thou growest bolder with each day. Hast thou no fear that thy daddy will have thee whipped for answering him so pert?"

"No," Elfrida would say, hugging him as well as she could for his ruff. "*I* know you wouldn't beat your girl, don't I, daddy?" And as she hugged him it felt *almost* like hugging her own daddy, who would never come home from America.

So she was almost contented. She knew that Lord Arden was not one of those to suffer for the Gunpowder Plot. She knew from the history of Arden that he would just be banished from the Court and end his days happily at Arden, and she was almost tempted just to go on and let what would happen, and stay with this new daddy who had lived three hundred years before, and pet him and be petted by him. Only, she felt that she must dn something because of Edred. The worst of it was that she could not think of anything to do. She did not know at all what was happening to Edred—whether he was being happy or unhappy.

As it happened, he was being, if not unhappy, at least uncomfortable. Mr. Parados, the tutor, who was as nasty a man as you will find in any seaside academy for young gentlemen, still remained at Arden House and taught the boys—Edred and his Cousin Richard. Mr. Parados was in high favour with the King because he had listened to what wasn't meant for him and reported it where it would do most mischief—a thing always very pleasing to King James I.—and Lady Arden dared not dismiss him. Besides, she was ill with trouble and anxiety, which Edred could not at all soothe by saying again and again, "Father *won't* be found guilty of treason—he *won't* be executed. He'll just be sent to Arden and live there quietly with you. I saw it all in a book."

But Lady Arden only cried and cried.

Mr. Parados was very severe, and rapped Edred's knuckles almost continuously during lesson time—and out of it. Said Cousin Richard, "He is for ever bent on spying and browbeating of us."

"He's always messing about—nasty sneak," said Edred. "I should like to be even with him before I go. And I will, too."

"Before you go? Go whither?" Cousin Richard asked.

"Elfrida and I are going away," Edred began, and then felt how useless it was to go on, since even when the 1908 Edred whom he was had gone, the 1605 Elfrida and Edred would, of course, still be there. That is, if—— He checked the old questions, which he had now no time to consider, and said, in a firm tone which was new to him, and which Elfrida would have been astonished and delighted to hear:—

"Yes, I've got two things to do—to be even with old Parrot-nose—to be revenged on him, I mean—and to get Elfrida out of the Tower. And I'll do that first, because she'll like to help with the other."

The boys were on the leads, their backs to a chimney and their faces towards the trap-door, which was the only way of getting on to the roof. It was very cold, and the north wind was blowing, but they had come there because it was one of the few places where Mr. Parrot-nose could not possibly come creeping up behind them to listen to what they were saying.

"Get her out of the Tower?" Dick laughed, and then was sad. "I would we could," he said.

"We *can*," said Edred, earnestly. "I've been thinking about it all the time, ever since we came out of the Tower, and I know the way. I shall want you to help me, Dick—you and one grown-up." He spoke in the same firm, self-reliant tone that was so new to him.

"One grown-up?" Dick asked.

"Yes. *I* think nurse would do it, and I'm going to find out if we can trust her."

"Trust her?" said Dick. "Why, she'd die

for any of us Ardens. Aye, and die on the rack before she would betray the lightest word of any of us."

"Then *that's* all right," said Edred.

"What is thy plot?" Dick asked, and he did not laugh, though he wanted to. You see, Edred looked so very small and weak, and the Tower was so very big and strong.

"I'm going to get Elfrida out," said Edred, "and I'm going to do it like Lady Nithsdale got her husband out. It will be quite easy. It all depends on knowing when the guard is changed, and I *do* know that."

"But how did my Lady Nithsdale get my Lord Nithsdale out—and from what?" Dick asked.

"Why, out of the Tower—*you* know," Edred was beginning, when he remembered that Dick did *not* know and couldn't know, because Lord Nithsdale hadn't yet been taken out of the Tower—hadn't even been put in; perhaps, for anything Edred knew, wasn't even born yet. So he said:—

"Never mind; I'll tell you all about Lady Nithsdale," and proceeded to tell Dick, vaguely, yet inspiringly, the story of that wise and brave lady. *I* haven't time to tell *you* the story, but any grown-up who knows history will be only too pleased to tell it.

Dick listened with most flattering interest, though it was getting dusk, and colder than ever. The lights were lighted in the house, and the trap-door had become a yellow square. A shadow in this yellow square warned Dick, and he pinched Edred's arm.

"Come," he said, "and let us apply ourselves to our books. Virtuous youths always act in their preceptors' absence as they would if their preceptors were present. I feel as though mine *were* present. Therefore, I take it, I am a virtuous youth——"

On which the shadow disappeared very suddenly, and the two boys, laughing in a choking inside sort of way, went down to learn their lessons by the light of two guttering tallow candles in solid silver candlesticks.

The next day Edred got the old nurse to take him to the Court, and because the Queen was very fond of Lady Arden he actually managed to see Her Majesty, and, what is more, to get permission to visit his father and sister in the Tower. The permission was written in the Queen's own hand, and bade the Lieutenant of the Tower to admit Master Edred Arden and Master Richard Arden and an attendant. Then the nurse became very busy with sewing, and two days went by, and Mr. Parados rapped the boys' fingers and scolded them and scowled at them—and wondered why they bore it all so patiently.

Then came The Day, and it was bitterly cold, and as the afternoon got older snow began to fall.

"So much the better," said the old nurse—"so much the better."

It was at dusk that the guard was changed at the Tower gate, and a quarter of an hour before dusk Lord Arden's carriage stopped at the Tower gate and an old nurse in ruff and cap and red cloak got out of it and lifted out two little gentlemen—one in black, with a cloak trimmed with squirrel fur, which was Edred, and another, which was Richard, in grey velvet and marten's fur. And the Lieutenant was called, and he read the Queen's order and nodded kindly to Edred, and they all went in. And as they went across the yard to the White Tower, where Lord Arden's lodging was, the snow fell thick on their cloaks and furs and froze to the stuff, for it was bitter cold.

And again:—

"So much the better," the nurse said—"so much the better."

Elfrida was with Lord Arden—sitting on his knee—when the visitors came in. She jumped up and greeted Edred with a glad cry and a very close hug.

"Go with nurse," he whispered through the hug; "do exactly what she tells you."

"But I've made a piece of poetry," Elfrida whispered, "and now you're here——"

"*Do what you're told*," whispered Edred in a tone she had never heard from him before, and so fiercely that she said no more about poetry. "We must get you out of this," Edred went on. "Don't be a duffer—think of Lady Nithsdale."

Then Elfrida understood. Her arms fell from round Edred's neck, and she ran back to Lord Arden and put her arms round *his* neck and kissed him over and over again.

"There, there, my maid, there, there," he said, patting her shoulder softly, for she was crying.

"Come with me to my chamber," said the nurse. "I would take thy measure for a new gown and petticoat."

But Elfrida clung closer. "She does not want to leave her dad," said Lord Arden, "dost thou, my maid?"

"No, no," said Elfrida, quite wildly. "I don't want to leave my daddy!"

"Come," said Lord Arden, "'tis but for a measuring time, and thou'lt come back, sweet lamb as thou art. Go now, to return the more quickly."

"Good-bye, dear, dear, *dear* daddy," said Elfrida, suddenly standing up. "Oh, my dear daddy, good-bye."

"Why, what a piece of work about a new frock!" said the nurse, crossly. "I've no patience with the child," and she caught Elfrida's hand and dragged her into the next room.

"Now," she whispered, already on her knees undoing Elfrida's gown, "not a moment to lose. Hold thy handkerchief to thy face and seem to weep as we go out. Why, thou'rt weeping already! So much the better!"

From under her wide hoop and petticoat the nurse drew out the clothes that were hidden there — a little suit of black exactly like Edred's — cap, cloak, stockings, shoes — all like Edred's to a hair.

And Elfrida, before she had finished crying, stood up, the exact image of her brother — except her face—and that would be hidden by the handkerchief. Then, very quickly, the nurse went to the door of the apartment and spoke to the guard there.

"Good lack, good gentleman," she said, "my little master is ill—he is too frail to bear these sad meetings and sadder partings. Convoy us, I pray you, to the outer gate, that I may find our coach and take him home, and afterwards I will return for my other charge—his noble cousin."

"Is it so?" said the guard, kindly. "Poor child. Well, such is life, mistress, and we all have tears to weep."

But he could not leave his post at Lord Arden's door to conduct them to the gates. But he told them the way, and they crossed the courtyard alone, and as they went the snow fell on their cloaks and froze there.

"'I WILL CONVEY HIM TO OUR COACH, GOOD MASTERS,' SHE SAID TO THE GUARD."

So that the guard at the gate, who had seen an old nurse and two little boys go in through the snow, now saw an old nurse and one little boy go out, all snow-covered, and the little boy appeared to be crying bitterly; and no wonder, the nurse explained, seeing his dear father and sister thus.

"I will convey him to our coach, good masters," she said to the guard, "and return for my other charge, young Master Richard Arden."

And on that she got Elfrida, in her boy's clothes, out at the gate and into the waiting carriage. The coachman, by private arrangement with the old nurse, was asleep on the box; and the footman, also by previous arrangement, was refreshing himself at a tavern near by.

"Under the seat," said the old nurse, and, thrusting Elfrida in, shut the coach door and left her. And there was Elfrida, dressed like a boy, huddled up among the straw at the bottom of the coach.

So far, so good. But the most dangerous part of the adventure still remained. The nurse got in again easily enough; she was

let in by the guards who had seen her cnme out. And as she went slowly across the snowy courtyard she heard ring under the gateway the stamping feet of the men who had come to relieve guard and to be themselves the new guard. So far, again, so good. The danger lay with the guard at the door of Lord Arden's rooms, and in the chance that some of the old guard might be lingering about the gateway when she came out, not with *one* little boy as they wnuld expect, but with *two*. But this had to be risked. The nurse waited as long as she dared, so as to lessen the chance of meeting any of the old guard as she went out with her charges. She waited quietly in a corner while Lord Arden talked with the boys, and when at last she said, "The time is done, my lord," she already knew that the guard at the room door had been changed.

"So now for it," said Edred, as he and Richard followed the nurse down the narrow steps and across the snowy courtyard.

The new guard saw the woman and two boys, and the captain of the guard read the Queen's paper, which the old nurse had taken care to get back from the Lieutenant. And as, plainly, Master Edred Arden and Master Richard Arden, with their attendant, liad passed in, so now they were permitted to pass out, and two minutes later a great coach was lumbering along the snowy streets, and inside it four people were emhracing in rapture at the success of their stratagem.

"But it was Edred thought of it," said Richard, as in honour bound, "and he arranged everything and carried it out."

"How splendid of him!" said Elfrida, warmly; and I think it was rather splendid of *her* not to spoil his pride and pleasure in this the first adventure he had ever planned and executed entirely on his own account. She could very easily have spoiled it, you know, hy pointing out to him that the whole thing was quite unnecessary, and that they could have got away much mnre easily hy going on to a corner in the Tower and saying poetry to the Mouldiwarp.

So they came to Arden House.

The coachman was apparently asleep again, and the footman went round and did something to the harness after he had got the front door opened, and it was quite easy fnr the nurse to send the footman who opened the door to order a meal to he served at once for Master Edred and Master Richard. So that no one saw that, instead of the two little boys who had left Arden Hnuse in the afternoon, three came back to it in the evening.

Then the nurse took them into the parlour and shut the door.

"Now," she said, "Master Richard will go take off his fine suit and Miss Arden will go into the little room and change her raiment. And for you, Master Edred, you wait here with me."

When the others had obediently gone the nurse stood looking at Edred with eyes that grew larger and different, and he stood looking at lier with eyes that grew rounder and rounder.

"Why," he said, at last, "you're the witch—the witch we took the tea and things to."

"And if I am?" said she. "Do you think you're the only people who can come back into other times? You're not all the world yet, Master Arden of Arden. But you've got the makings of a fine boy and a fine man, and I think you've learned something in these old ancient times."

He had. There is not a doubt of it. Whether it was being thought important enough to be imprisoned in the Tower, or whether it was the long talks he had with Sir Walter Raleigh, that fine genius and great gentleman, or whether it was Mr. Parados's knuckle-rappings and scowlings, I do not know. But it is certain that this adventure was the beginning of the change in Edred which ended in his being "brave and kind and wise," as the old rhyme had told him to be.

"And now," said the nurse, as Elfrida appeared in her girl's clothes, "there is not a moment to lose. Already at the Tower they have found out our trick. You must go back to your own times."

"She's the witch," Edred briefly answered the open amazement in Elfrida's eyes.

"There is no time to lose," the nurse repeated.

"I *must* be even with old Parados first," said Edred, and so he was; and it took exactly a quarter of an hour, and I will tell you all ahout it afterwards.

When he *was* even with old Parados the old nurse sent Richard to bed, and then Elfrida made haste to say: "I did make some poetry tn call the Mouldiwarp, but it's all ahout the Tnwer, and we're not there now. It's no use saying

> Oh, Mouldiwarp, you have the power
> To get us out of this beastly Tower,

when we're not *in* the Tower, and I can't think nf anything else. And——"

But the nurse interrupted her.

"Never mind about poetry," she said;

"poetry's all very well for children, but I know a trick worth two of that."

She led them into the dining-room—where the sideboard stood covered with silver—set down the candle, lifted down the great salver with the arms of Arden engraved upon it, and put it on the table.

She breathed on the salver and traced triangles and a circle on the dulled surface—and as the mistiness of her breath faded and the silver shone out again undimmed, there, suddenly, in the middle of the salver, was the live white Mouldiwarp of Arden, looking extremely cross!

"You've no manners," it said to the nurse, "bringing me here in that off-hand, rude way, without 'With your leave!' or 'By your leave!' Elfrida could easily have made some poetry. You know well enough," it added, angrily, "that it's positively painful to me to be summoned by your triangles and things. Poetry's so easy and simple."

"Poetry's too slow for this night's work," said the nurse, shortly. "Come—take the children away—and have done with it."

"You make everything so difficult," said the Mouldiwarp, more crossly than ever; "that's the worst of people who think they know a lot and really only know a little, and pretend they know everything. If I'd come the easy poetry way I could have taken them back as easily. But now—well, it can't be helped. I'll take them back, of course, but it'll be a way they won't like. They'll have to go on to the top of the roof and jump off."

"I don't believe that's necessary," said the witch-nurse.

"All right," said the Mouldiwarp; "get them away yourself, then," and it actually began to disappear.

"No, no," said Elfrida; "we'll do anything you say."

"There's a foot of snow on the roof," said the witch-nurse.

"YOU'VE NO MANNERS," IT SAID TO THE NURSE.

"So much the better," said the Mouldiwarp; "so much the better. *You* ought to know that."

"You think yourself very clever," said the nurse.

"Not half so clever as I *am*," said the Mouldiwarp, rather unreasonably, Elfrida thought. "There!" it added, sharply, as a great hammering at the front door shattered the quiet of the night. "There—to the roof for your lives! And I'm not at all sure that it's not too late."

The knocking was growing louder and louder.

(To be continued.)

THE HOUSE OF ARDEN

BY E. NESBIT.

A STORY FOR CHILDREN.

CHAPTER X.

DEVELOPMENTS.

"COME on," said Edred, "you measure out the hypo and put the four pie-dishes ready. I'll get the water."

He got it, with Mrs. Honeysett's help—two brimming pails full.

"You mustn't come in for anything, will you, Mrs. Honeysett?" he earnestly urged. "You see, if the door's open ever so little, all the photographs will be done for."

"Law-love-a-duck!" said Mrs. Honeysett, holding her fat waist with her fat hands. "*I* sha'n't come in; I ain't got nothing to come in *for*."

"We'll bolt the door, all the same," said Edred, when she was gone, "in case she was to think of something."

Long dusty rays of light came through the cracks where the hinges of the shutters were. Newspapers were no good for them. The door had to be unbolted and Mrs. Honeysett found. She was sitting in a little low chair at the back door plucking a white chicken. The sight of the little white feathers floating fluffily about brought wonderful memories to Edred. But he only said:—

"I say, you haven't any old curtains, have you? Thick ones—or thin, if they are red."

Mrs. Honeysett laid the chicken down among its white feathers, and went to a chest of drawers that stood in the kitchen.

"Here you are," she said, handing out two old red velvet curtains, with which he disappeared.

Dear reader, you must try and imagine the rapture with which the two children saw the perfect development of the six little perfect pictures. For they *were* perfect. They were perfect pictures of Arden Castle at a time when it, too, was perfect. No broken arches, no crumbling wall, but every part neat and clear-cut as they had seen it when they went into the past that was three hundred years ago.

They were equally fortunate with the second film. It, too, had its six faultless pictures of Arden Castle three hundred years ago. And the last film developed just as finely. Only, just before the moment which was the right moment for taking the film out of the hypo-bath and beginning to wash it, a

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tiny white feather fell out of Edred's hair into the dish. It was so tiny that in that dim light he did not notice it. And it did not stick to the film or do any of those things which you might have feared if you had seen the little white thing flutter down. It may have been the feather's doing; I don't know. I just tell you the thing as it happened.

Of course, you know that films have to be pinned up to dry.

Well, the first film was pinned on the right-hand panel of the door and the second film was pinned on the left-hand panel of the door. And when it came to the third, the one that had had the little white feather dropped near it, there was nothing wooden left to pin it to — for the walls were of stone — nothing wooden except the shutters. So it was pinned across these.

"It doesn't matter," said Edred, "because we needn't open the shutters till it's dry."

And with that he stuck in four pins at its four corners, and turned to blow out the lamp and unbolt the door. He meant to do this, but the door, as a matter of fact, wasn't bolted at all, because Edred had forgotten to do it when he came back with the curtains, so he couldn't have unbolted it anyway.

But he could blow out the red-sided lamp; and he did.

And then the wonderful thing happened. Of course the room ought to have been quite dark. I'm sure enough trouble had been taken to make it so. But it wasn't. The window, the window where the shutters were —the shutters that the film was pinned on— the film on which the little white feather had fallen—the little white feather that had settled on Edred's hair when Mrs. Honeysett was plucking that chicken at the back door— that window now showed as a broad oblong of light. And in that broad oblong was a sort of shining, a faint sparkling movement, like the movement of the light on the sheet of a cinematograph before the pictures begin to show.

"Oh!" said Elfrida, catching at Edred's hand. What she did catch was his hair. She felt her way down his arm, and so caught what she had meant to catch, and held it fast.

"It's *more* magic," said Edred, ungratefully. "I do wish——"

"Oh, hush!" said Elfrida; "look—oh, look!"

The light — broad, oblong — suddenly changed from mere light to figures, to movement. It was a living picture—rather like a cinematograph, but much more like something else. The something else that it was more like was *life*.

It seemed as though the window had been opened—as though they could see through it into the world of light and sunshine and blue sky—the world where things happen.

There was the castle, and there were people going across the drawbridge—men with sacks on their backs. And a man with a silver chain round his neck and a tall stick in his hand was standing under the great gateway telling them where to take the sacks. And a cart drove up, with casks, and they were rolled across the drawbridge and under the tall arch of the gate-tower. The men were dressed in clothes rather like those the children had seen worn by serving-men in Gunpowder Plot times, but rather plainer.

Then something blinked, and the scene changed. It was indoors now — a long room with many pictures on one side of it and many windows on the other; a lady in a large white collar and beautiful long curls, very like Aunt Edith, was laying fine dresses in a chest. A gentleman, also with long hair, and with a good deal of lace about his collar and cuffs, was putting jugs and plates of gold and silver into another chest; and servants kept bringing more golden grand things, and more and more.

Edred and Elfrida did not say a word. They couldn't. What they were looking at was far too thrilling. But in each heart the same words were uttered:—

"That's the treasure!" And each mind held the same thought.

"If it only goes on till the treasure's hidden, we shall see where they put it, and then we can go and find it."

I think myself that the white Mouldiwarp was anxious to help a little. I believe it had arranged the whole of this exhibition so that the children might get an idea of the whereabouts of the treasure, and so cease to call on it at all hours of the day and night with the sort of poetry which even a mole must see not to be so *very* good. However this may be, it was a wonderful show. One seemed to see things better somehow like that, through the window that looked into the past, than one did who was really *in* the past taking an active part in what was going on.

There appeared, at any rate, to be no doubt that this really *was* the treasure, and still less that it was a treasure both plentiful and picturesque. Quickly and more quickly the beautiful rich things were being packed into the chests. More and more pale looked

"A CHEST WAS BEING CARRIED BY FOUR MEN, WHO STRAINED AND STAGGERED UNDER ITS WEIGHT."

the lady; more and more anxious the gentleman.

The lady was taking from her waiting-woman little boxes and bundles with which the woman's apron was filled, and the chest before which she was kneeling was nearly full when the door at the end of the gallery opened suddenly, and Elfrida and Edred, in the dark in the still-room, were confronted with the spectacle of themselves coming down the long picture-gallery towards that group of chests and treasure and hurried human people. They saw themselves in blue silk and lace and black velvet, and they saw on their own faces fear and love, and the wonder what was to happen next. They saw themselves embraced by the grown-ups, who were quite plainly father and mother—they saw themselves speak, and the grown-ups reply.

"I'd give all my pocket-money for a year to hear what they're saying," Edred told himself.

"That daddy's just like *my* daddy," Elfrida was telling herself, "and just like the daddy in the Tower that was so like my own daddy."

Then the children in the picture kneeled down, and the daddy in the picture laid his hands on their heads, and the children out of the picture bent their own heads there in the dark still-room, for they knew what was happening in the picture. Elfrida even half held out her arms, but it was no good.

Again the scene changed. A chest was being carried by four men, who strained and staggered under its weight. They were carrying it along a vaulted passage by ropes that passed under the chest and over their shoulders. Every now and then they set it down and stretched, and wiped their faces. And the picture kept on changing so that the children seemed to be going with the men down a flight of stairs into a spacious hall full of men, all talking, and very busy with armour and big boots, and then across the courtyard, full of more men, very busy, too, polishing axes and things that looked like spears, cleaning muskets and fitting new flints to pistols and sharpening swords on a big grindstone. Edred would have loved to stay and watch them do these things, but they and their work were gone quite quickly, and the chest and the men who carried it were going under an archway. Here one of the men wanted to rest again, but the others said it was not worth while—they were almost there. It was quite plain that they said this, though no sound could be heard.

"Now we shall *really* know," said Edred

to himself. Elfrida squeezed his hand. That was just what she was thinking, too.

The men stopped at a door, knocked, knocked again, and yet once more. And, curiously enough, the children in the still-room could hear the sound of the knocking quite plainly, though they had heard nothing else.

The men looked at each other across the chest that they had set down. Then one man set his shoulder to the door. There was a scrunching sound and the picture disappeared—went out; and there were the shutters with the film pinned across them, and behind them the door, open, and Mrs. Honeysett telling them that dinner—which was roast rabbit and a boiled hand of pork—would be cold if they didn't make haste and come along.

"Oh, Mrs. Honeysett," said Elfrida, with deep feeling, "you are too bad—you really are!"

"I hope I ve not spoiled the photos," said Mrs. Honeysett; "but I did knock three times, and you was that quiet I was afraid something had happened to you—poisoned yourselves without thinking, or something of that."

"It's too bad," said Edred, bitterly; "it's much too bad. I don't want any dinner; I don't want anything. Everything's spoiled."

"Perhaps," said Mrs. Honeysett, patiently, "I might ha' gone on knocking longer, only I thought the door was bolted—you did so keep on a-bolting of it at the beginning, didn't you? So I just got hold of the handle to try, and it come open in my hand. Come along, lovey; don't bear malice now. I didn't go for to do it. An' I'll get you some more of whatever it is that's spoiled, and you can take some more photos to-morrow."

"You might have known we were all right," said Edred, still furious; but both thought it only fair to say, "It wasn't the *photographs* that were spoiled"—and they said it at the same moment.

"Then what was it?" said Mrs. Honeysett. "And do come along, for goodness' sake, and eat your dinner while it's hot."

"It was—it was a different sort of picture," said Elfrida, with a gulp, "and it *was* a pity."

"Never mind, love," said Mrs. Honeysett, who was as kind as a grandmother, and I can't say more than that; "there's a lovely surprise coming by and by for good little gells and boys, and the rabbit'll be stone-cold if you don't make haste—leastways, it would have been if I hadn't thought to pop it in the oven when I came to call you, knowing full well what your hands would be like after all that messing about with poison in dishes; and if I was your aunt I'd forbid it downright. And now come along and wash your hands, and don't let's have any more nonsense about it. Do you hear?"

I dare say you notice that Mrs. Honeysett was quite cross at the end of this speech and quite coaxing and kind at the beginning. She had just talked herself into being cross. It's quite easy. I dare say you have often done it.

It was at the end of dinner that Elfrida, as she got down from her chair, saw Mrs. Honeysett's face, and saw how different it looked from the kind face that she usually wore. She went over tu her very slowly, and very quickly threw her arms round her and kissed her.

"I'm sorry we've been so piggy," she said. "It's not your fault that you're not clever enough to know about pictures and things, is it?"

If Mrs. Honeysett hadn't been a perfect dear, this apology would have been worse than none. But she *was* a perfect dear, so she laughed and hugged Elfrida, and somehow Edred got caught into the hug and the laugh, and the three were friends again. The sky was blue and the sun began to shine.

And then the two children went down to old Neale's.

There were roses in his garden now, and white English flags and lupins and tall foxgloves bordering the little brick path. Old Neale was sitting "on a brown Windsor chair," as Edred said, in the sun by his front door. Over his head was a jackdaw in a wicker-cage, and Elfrida did not approve of this till she saw the cage-door was open, and that the jackdaw was sitting in the cage because he liked it, and not because he must. She had been in prison in the Tower, you remember, and people who have been in prison never like to see live things in cages. There was a tabby and white cat of squarish shape sitting on the wooden threshold. (Why are cats who live in country cottages almost always tabby and white and squarish?) The feathery tail of a brown spaniel flogged the flags lazily in the patch of shade made by the water-butt. It was a picture of rural peace, and old Neale was asleep in the middle of it. I am glad to tell you that Lord Arden and his sister were polite enough to wait till he awoke of his own accord, instead of shouting "Hi!" or rattling the smooth brown iron latch of the gate, as some children would have done.

They just sat down on the dry grassy bank

opposite his gate, and looked at the blue and white butterflies and the flowers and the green potato-tops through the green-grey garden palings.

And while they sat there Elfrida had an idea—so sudden and so good that it made her jump. But she said nothing, and Edred said:—

"Pinch the place hard, and if it's still there you'll kill it perhaps"—for he thought his sister had jumped because she had been bitten by an ant.

When they had finished looking at the butterflies and the red roses and the green-growing things, they looked long and steadily at old Neale, and, of course, he awoke, as people always do if you look at them long enough and hard enough. And he got up, rather shaking, and put his hand to his forehead, and said: "Your lordship——"

"How are you?" said Elfrida. "We haven't found the treasure yet."

"But ye will, ye will," said old Neale. "Come into the house now; or will ye come round along to the arbour and have a drink of milk?"

"We'd as soon stay here," said Edred—they had come through the gate now, and Edred was patting the brown spaniel, while Elfrida stroked the squarish cat. "Mrs. Honeysett said you knew all the stories."

"Ah," said old Neale, "a fine girl, Mrs. Honeysett. Her father worked Sellinge Farm, where the fairies churn the butter for the bride so long as there's no cross words. They don't never get too much to do, them fairies." He chuckled, sighed, and said:—

"I know a power of tales. And I know, always I do, which it is that people want. What you're after's the story of the East House. Isn't it now? Is the old man a-failing of his wits, or isn't he?"

"We want to know," said Edred, companionably sharing the flagstone with the feather-tailed spaniel, "the story about why that part of the house in the castle is shut up and all cobwebby and dusty and rusty and musty, and whether there's any reason why it shouldn't be all cleaned up and made nice again, if we find the treasure so that we've got enough money to pay for new curtains and carpets and things?"

"It's a sad tale that," said old Neale, "a tale for old folks—or middle-aged folks, let's say—not for children. You'd never understand it if I was to tell it you, likely as not."

"We *like* grown-up stories," said Elfrida, with dignity, and Edred added:—

"We can understand *anything* that grown-ups understand if it's told us properly. I understand all about the laws of gravitation, and why the sun doesn't go round the earth but does the opposite; I understood *that* directly Aunt Edith explained it, and about fixed stars, and the spectroscope, and microbes, and the Equator not being real, and—and heaps of things."

"Ah," said old Neale, admiringly, "you'll be a-busting with book larnin' afore you come to your twenty-one, I lay. I only hope the half of it's true, and they're not deceiving of you, a trusting innocent. I never did hold myself with that about the sun not moving. Why, you can see it a-doin' of it with your own naked eyes any day of the week."

"*You* wouldn't

H. R. MILLAR '02

"'AH,' SAID OLD NEALE, ADMIRINGLY, 'YOU'LL BE A-BUSTING WITH BOOK LARNIN' AFORE YOU COME TO YOUR TWENTY-ONE, I LAY.'"

deceive anyone," said Elfrida, gently. "*Do* tell us the story."

So old Neale began, and he began like this:—

"It was a long time ago—before my time even, it was, but not so long afore, 'cause I can recomember my father talking about it. He was coachman at the castle when it all happened, so, of course, he knew everything there was to know, my mother having been the housekeeper and gone through it all with the family. There was a Miss Elfrida then, same as there is now, only she was older'n what you are, missy. And the gentlemen lads from far and near they come a-courting her, for she was a fine girl—a real beauty—with hair as black as a coal and eyes like the sea when it's beating up for a storm, before the white horses comes along. So I've heard my father say—not that I ever see her myself. And she kept her pretty head in the air, and wouldn't turn it this way or that for e'er a one of them all. And the old lord he loved her too dear to press her against her wish and will, and her so young. So she stayed single and watched the sea."

"What did she do that for?" Edred asked.

"To see if her sweetheart's ship wasn't a-coming home. For she'd got a sweetheart right enough, she had, unbeknown to all. It was her cousin Dick—a ne'er-do-weel, if ever there was one—and it turned out afterwards she'd broken the sixpence with him and swore to be ever true, and he'd gone overseas to find a fortune. And so she watched the sea every day regular, and every day regular he didn't come. But every day another young chap used to come a-riding—a fine young gentleman and well-to-do, but he was the same kidney as Master Dick, only he'd got a fine fortune, so his wild oats never got a chance to grow strong like Master Dick's."

"Poor Dick!" said Elfrida.

"Not so fast, missy," said the old man. "Well, her granfer and her granny—the old earl and his lady—they said:—

Have him that's here
And loves you dear,

as the saying is. Her own father and mother was dead, poor young thing. A Frewin he was, and his christened name Arnold. And she says 'No.' But they keeps on saying 'Yes,' and he keeps on saying 'Do!' So they wears her down, telling her Dick was drowned dead for sure, and I don't know what all. And at last she says: 'Very well, then, I'll marry you—if you can stand to marry a girl that's got all her heart in the sea along of a dead young chap as she was promised to.' And the wedding was set for Christmas. Miss Elfrida, she slep' in the room in the East House that looks out towards Arden Knoll, and the servants in the attics, and the old people in the other part of the house.

"And that night, when all was asleep, I think she heard a tap, tap at her window, and at first she'd think it was the ivy—but no. So presently she'd take heart to go to the window, and there was a face outside that had climbed up by the ivy, and it was her own true love that they'd told her was drowned."

"How splendid!" said Edred.

"How dreadful for Mr. Frewin!" said Elfrida.

"That's what she thought, miss; and she couldn't face it. So she puts on her riding-coat and she gets out of window and down the ivy with him, and off to London; and in the morning, when the bells begun to ring for her wedding, and the bridegroom come, there wasn't no bride for him. She left a letter to say she was very sorry, but it had to be. So then they shut up the East House."

"So that's the story?" said Elfrida.

"Half of it, miss," said old Neale, and he took out a black clay pipe and a screw of tobacco, and very slowly and carefully filled the pipe and lighted it, before he went on: "They shut up the East House, where she'd been used to sleep; but it was kep' swep' and dusted, and the old folks was broken-hearted, for never a word come from Miss Elfrida. An' if I know anything of the feelings of a grandparent, they kept on saying to each other: 'She might ha' trusted us. She might 'a' known we'd never 'a' denied her nothing.' And then one night there was a knock at the door, and there was Miss Elfrida that was—Mrs. Dick now—with her baby in her arms. Mr. Dick was dead, sudden in a accident, and she'd come home to her grandparents. They couldn't make enough of the poor young thing and her baby. She had her old rooms and there she lived, and she was getting a bit happier and worshipping of her baby and the old people worshipping it and her too. And then one night someone comes up the ivy, same as Master Dick did, and takes away—not her—but the baby."

"How dreadful!" breathed Elfrida. "Did they get it back?"

"Never. And never a word was ever found out about who took it, or why, or where they took it to. Only a week or two after Mr. Frewin was killed in the hunting-field, and as they picked him up he said: 'Elfrida; tell Elfrida——' and he was trying to say what they was to tell her, when

he died. Some folks hold as 'twas him stole the baby, to be even with her for jilting of him, or else to pretend to find it and get her to marry him out of gratitude. But no one'll ever know. And the baby's mother, she wore away bit by bit, to a shadow, and then she died, and after that the East House was shut up for good and all, to fall into rot and ruin like it is now. Don't you cry, missy. I know'd you wouldn't like the story, but you would have it; but don't you cry. It's all long ago, and she and her baby and her young husband's all been happy together in Heaven this long time now, I lay."

"I *do* like the story," said Elfrida, gulping, "but it *is* sad, isn't it?"

"Thank you for telling it," Edred said; "but I don't think it's any good, really, being unhappy about things that are so long ago, and all over and done with."

"I wish we could go back into the past and find the baby for her," Elfrida whispered—and Edred whispered back:—

"It's the treasure we've got to find. Excuse our whispering, Mr. Neale. Thank you for the story—oh, and I wanted to ask you who owns the land now—all the land about here, I mean, that used to belong to us Ardens?"

"That Jackson chap," said old Neale, "him that made a fortune in the soap boiling. The Tallow King, they call him. But he's got too rich for the house he's got. He's bought a bigger place in Yorkshire, that used to belong to the Duke of Sanderstead, and the Arden lands are to be sold next year, so I'm told."

"Oh," said Edred, clasping his hands, "if we could only find the treasure, and buy back the land! We haven't forgotten what we said the first time: if we found the treasure we'd make all the cottages comfortable, and new thatch everywhere."

"That's a good lad," said old Neale. "You make haste and find the treasure. And if you don't find it, never fret; there's ways of helping other folks without finding of treasure, so there is. You come and see old Neale again, my lord, and I shouldn't wonder but what I'd have a white rabbit for you next time you come this way."

"He *is* an old dear," said Elfrida, as they went home, "and I do think the films will be dry by the time we get back; but perhaps we'd better not print them till to-morrow morning."

"There's plenty of light to-day," said Edred, and Elfrida said:—

"I say!"

"Well?"

"Did you notice the kind of clothes we wore in those pictures—where they were stowing away the treasure?"

"*Oh!*" groaned Edred, recalled to a sense of his wrongs. "If only Mrs. Honeysett hadn't opened the door just when she did, we should know exactly where the treasure was. It was the West Tower they took it to, wasn't it?"

"I'm not sure," said Elfrida, "but——"

"And if it had gone on we *should* have been sure—we should have seen them come away again."

"IT HELD CLOTHES FAR RICHER THAN ANY THEY HAD SEEN YET."

"Yes," said Elfrida, and again she remarked, "I say!"

Edred again said, "Well?"

"Well—suppose we looked in the chests we should be sure to find clothes like *those*, and then we should be back there—living in those times, and we could *see* the treasure put away, and then we really *should* know."

"Ai, first-class, ripping," was Edred's enthusiastic rejoinder. "Come on—I'll race you to the gate."

He did race her, and won by about thirty white Mouldiwarps' lengths.

The attic was easily found, and once more the children stood among the chests, with the dusty roof and the dusty sunbeams.

"Come on," cried Elfrida, joyously. "I shall know the dress directly I see it. Mine was blue silk with sloping shoulders, and yours was black velvet and a Vandyke collar."

Together they flung back the lid of a chest they had not yet opened. It held clothes far richer than any they had seen yet. The doublets and cloaks and bodices were stiff with gold embroidery and jewels. But there was no blue silk dress with sloping shoulders and no black velvet suit and Vandyke collar.

"Oh, never mind," said Edred, bundling the splendid clothes back by double armfuls. "Help me to smooth these down so that the lid will shut, and we'll try the next chest."

But the lid would not shut at all till Elfrida had taken all the things out and folded them properly, and then it shut quite easily.

Then they went on to the next chest.

"I have a magic inside feeling that they're in *this* one," said Elfrida, gaily. And so they may have been. The children never knew—for the next chest was *locked*, and the utmost efforts of four small arms failed to move the lid a hair's breadth.

"Oh, bother!" said Edred, "we'll try the next."

But the next was locked, too—and the next, and the one after that, and the one beyond, and—— Well, the fact is, they were *all* locked.

The children looked at each other in something quite like despair. "I feel," said the boy, "like a baffled burglar."

"I feel," said the girl, "as if I was just going to understand something. Oh, wait a minute; it's coming. I think," she added, very slowly, "I think it means if we go anywhere we've got to go wherever it was they wore those glorious stiff gold clothes. That's what the chest's open for; that's what the others are locked for. See?"

"Then let's put them on and go," said Edred.

"I don't think I want any more Tower of Londons," said Elfrida, doubtfully.

"I don't mind what it is," said Edred. "I've found out one thing. We always come safe out of it, whatever it is. And besides," he added, remembering many talks with his good friend, Sir Walter Raleigh, "an English gentleman must be afraid of nothing save God and his conscience."

"All right," said Elfrida, laying hands on the chest-lid that hid the golden splendour. "You might help," she said.

But Edred couldn't. He laid hands on the chest, of course, and he pulled and Elfrida pulled, but the chest-lid was as fast now as any of the others.

"Done in the eye!" said Edred. It was a very vulgar expression, and I can't think where he picked it up.

> "He that will not when he may,
> He shall not when he would—a,"

said Elfrida—and I do know where she learned that. It was from an old song Mrs. Honeysett used to sing when she blackleaded the stoves.

"I suppose we must chuck it for to-day," said Edred, when he had quite hurt his fingers by trying all the chests once more, and had found that every single one was shut tight as wax. "Come on—we'll print the photographs."

But the films were not dry enough. They never are when you just expect them to be; so they locked the still-room door on the outside, and hung the key on a nail high up in the kitchen chimney. Mrs. Honeysett was not in the kitchen at that moment, but she came hurrying in the next.

"Here you are, my lambs," she said, cheerily, "and just in time for the surprise."

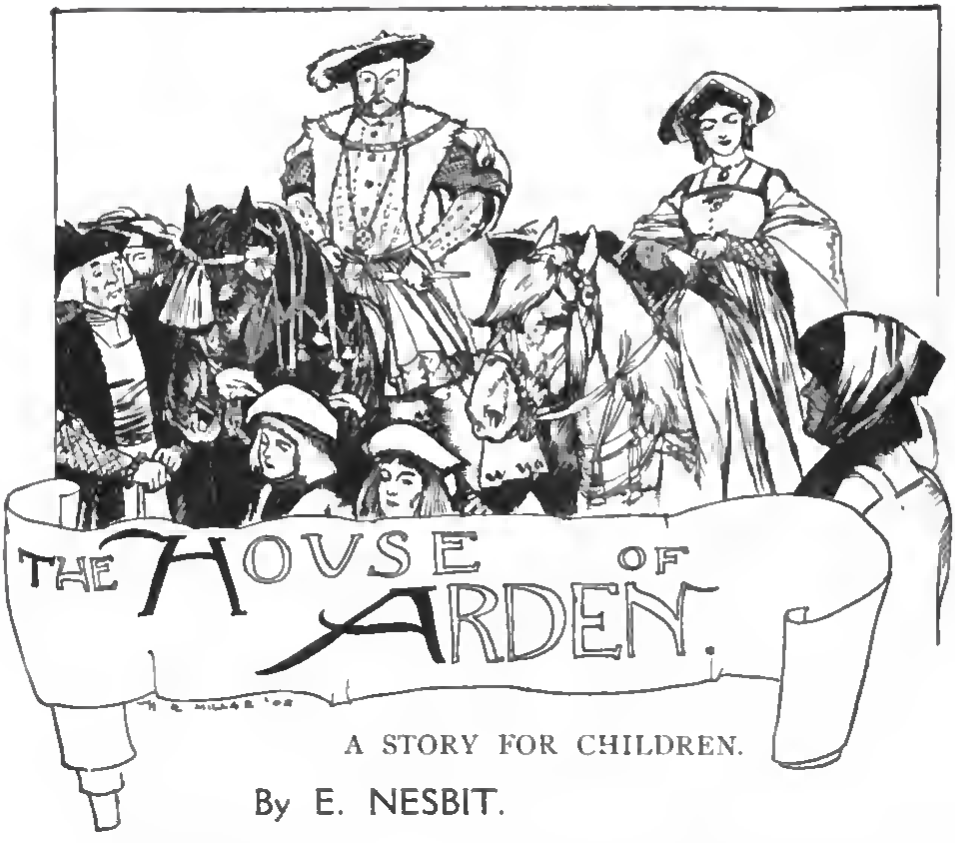
"Oh, I'd forgotten the surprise. That makes two of it, doesn't it?" said Elfrida. "Do tell us what it is. We need a nice surprise to make up for everything, if you only knew."

"Ah," said Mrs. Honeysett, "you mean because of me opening that there door. Well, there *is* two surprises. One's roast chicken. For *supper*," she added, impressively.

"Then I know the other," said Edred. "Aunt Edith's coming."

And she was—indeed, at that very moment, as they looked through the window, they saw her blue dress coming over the hill, and joyously tore out to meet her.

(To be continued.)



THE HOUSE OF ARDEN.

A STORY FOR CHILDREN.

By E. NESBIT.

CHAPTER XI.

MAY BLOSSOM AND PEARLS.

"WE should so like to see Richard Arden, wherever he is," said Edred, when they had called the Mouldiwarp up by some poetry that I haven't time to tell you. And the Mouldiwarp, by some magic that I haven't time to tell you about either, took them to him. And the first real thing which they perceived after the magic was music—the kind of music that makes you want to dance. And dance they did.

"What is it? Why are we dancing?" Edred incautiously asked of the little girl whose hand—and not Elfrida's—he found that his left hand was holding. The child laughed—just laughed, she did not answer. It was Elfrida who had his right hand, and her own right hand was clasped in that of a boy dressed in green. It was Cousin Richard.

"Oh," she said, with a note of glad recognition. "It's you! I'm so glad! What is it? Why are we dancing?"

"It's May-Day," said Cousin Richard, "and the King is coming to look on at the revels."

"What King?" she asked.

"Who but King Harry?" he said. "King Harry and his new Queen, that but of late was the Lady Anna Boleyn."

"I say, Dick," said Edred, across his sister, "I am jolly glad to see you again. We——"

"Not now," said Dick, earnestly; "not a word now. It is not safe. And besides—here comes the King!"

The King came slowly on a great black horse, riding between the green trees. He himself wore white and green like the May-bushes, and so did the gracious lady riding beside him on a white horse, whose long tail almost swept the ground and whose long mane fluttered in the breeze like a tattered banner.

"I wish I didn't know so much history," gasped Elfrida, through the quick music. "It's dreadful to know that her head——" She broke off in obedience to an imperative twitch of Richard's hand on hers.

"Don't!" he said. "I have *not* to think. And I've heard that history's all lies. Perhaps they'll always be happy like they are now. The only way to enjoy the past is not to think of the future—the past's future, I mean—and I've got something else to say to you presently," he added, rather sternly.

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The ring broke up into an elaborate figure. The children found themselves fingering the coloured ribbons that hung from the Maypole which was the centre of their dance, twining, intertwining, handing on the streamers to other small, competent fingers. In and out, in and out—a most complicated dance. The King and Queen had reined up their horses and watched the play, well pleased. Suddenly the dance ended and the children, formed into line, were saluting the Royal onlookers.

"A fair dance and footed right featly," said the King in a great, jolly voice. "Now get your wind, my merry men all, and give us a song for the honour of the May Queen and of my dear lady here."

But even while they were singing Elfrida was turning over in her mind the old question. Could anything they did have any effect on the past? It seemed impossible that it should not be so. If one could get a word alone with that happy, stately lady on the white horse, if one could warn her, could help somehow!

Somebody was pulling at her green skirt. An old woman in a cap that fitted tightly and hid all her hair—an old woman who was saying, "Go to her! go!" and pushing her forward. Someone else put a big bunch of wild flowers into her hand, and this person also pushed her forward. And forward she had to go, quite alone, the nosegay in her hand, across the open space of green sward under the eyes of several hundreds of people, all in their best clothes and all watching her.

She went on till she came to the spot where the King and Queen were, and then she paused and dropped two curtsies, one to each of them. Then, quite without meaning to do it, she found herself saying:—

> May-Day! May-Day!
> This is the happy play day!
> All the woods with flowers are gay,
> Lords and ladies, come and play!
> Lords and ladies, rich and poor,
> Come to the wild woods' open door!
> Hinds and yeomen, Queen and King,
> Come do honour to the Spring!
> And join us in our merrymaking.

And when she had said that she made two more nice little curtsies and handed up the flowers to the Queen.

"If we had known your Majesties' purpose," said a tall, narrow-faced man in a long gown, "your Majesties had had another than this rustic welcome."

"Our purpose," said the King, "was to surprise you. The Earl of Arden, you say, is hence?"

"His son and daughter are here to do homage to your Highness," said the gowned man, and then Elfrida saw that Edred was beside her.

"Hither, lad," said the King, and reaching down a hand caught Edred's. "Your foot on mine," said His Majesty. "So!" and he swung Edred up on to the saddle in front of him. Elfrida drew nearer to the white horse as the Queen beckoned her, and the Queen stooped low over her saddle to ask her name. Now was the moment that Elfrida had wished for; now was the chance, if ever, to warn the Queen.

"Elfrida Arden's my name," she said. "Your Majesty, may I say something?"

"Say on," said the Queen, raising fine eyebrows, but smiling too.

"I want to warn you," said Elfrida, quickly whispering, "and *don't* not pay attention because I'm only a little girl. I *know*. You may think I don't know, but I do. I want to warn you——"

"Already once this morning I have been warned," said the Queen. "What croaking voices for May-Day!"

"Who warned you, your Majesty?"

"An old hag who came to my chamber in spite of my maids said she had a May charm to keep my looks and my lord's love."

"What was the charm?" Elfrida asked eagerly, forgetting to say "Majesty" again.

"It was quite simple," said the Queen. "I was to keep my looks and my love so long as I *never dropped a kerchief*. But if I dropped a kerchief I should lose more than my looks and my love; she said I should lose my head"—the Queen laughed low—"within certain days from the dropping of that kerchief—this head you see here." She laughed again.

"Don't, oh, don't!" said Elfrida. "Nineteen days, that's the warning—I do hope it'll do some good. I do like you, dear Queen. You are so strong and splendid. I would wish to be like you when I grow up."

The Queen's fine face looked troubled.

"Please Heaven, thou'lt be better than I," she said, stooping lower still from her horse: Elfrida standing on tip-toe, she kissed her.

"Oh, do be careful," said Elfrida. "Your darling head!" and the Queen kissed her again.

Then a noise rather like bagpipes rose shrill and sudden, and the King cried, "A merry tune that calls to the feet. Come, my sweeting, shall we tread a measure with the rest?" So down they came from their horses, King and Queen, and led the country dance.

The King had sprung from his horse with

Edred in his arms, and now he and his sister drew back towards Cousin Richard.

"How pretty it all is!" said Edred. "I should like to stay here for ever."

"If I were you," said Richard, very disagreeably indeed, "I would not stay here an hour."

"Why? Is it dangerous? Will they cut our heads off?"

"Not that I know of," said Cousin Richard, still thoroughly disagreeable. "I wasn't thinking about your heads. There are more important things than your heads in the world, I should think."

"Not so very much more," said Elfrida, meekly—"to us, I mean. And what are you so cross about?"

"I should have thought——" Richard was beginning, when the old woman who told Elfrida to go forward with the nosegay of ceremony sidled up to them.

"Into the woods, my children," she whispered, quickly—"into the woods. In a moment the Queen will burst into tears, and the King will have scant kindness for those whose warnings have set his Queen to weeping."

They backed into the bushes, and the green leaves closed behind the four.

"Quick!" said the witch; "this way." They followed her through the wood under oaks and yew trees, pressing through hazels and chestnuts to a path.

"Now run!" she said, and herself led the way nimbly enough for one of her great age. Their run brought them to a thinning of the wood—then out of it—on to the downs, whence they could see Arden Castle and its moat, and the sea.

"Now," the old woman said, "mark well the spot where the moat stream rises. It is there that the smugglers' cave was, when Betty Lovell foretold the landing of the French."

"Why," said Edred and Elfrida, "you're the witch again! You're Betty Lovell!"

"Who else?" said the old woman. "Now,

"'NOW RUN!' SHE SAID, AND HERSELF LED THE WAY NIMBLY ENOUGH FOR ONE OF HER GREAT AGE."

call on the Mouldiwarp and hasten back to your own time. For the King will raise the country against the child who has made his sweeting to shed tears. And she will tell him, she keeps nothing from him, yet——"

"She won't tell him about the kerchief?"

"She will, and when she drops it on that other May-Day at Greenwich he will remember. Come, shall I call the Mouldiwarp, or will you?"

"You do," said Elfrida. "I say, Dicky, what did you mean? Do tell us—there's a dear!"

Betty Lovell was tearing up the short turf in patches, and pulling the lumps of chalk from under it. "Help me," she cried, "or I sha'n't be in time!" So they all helped.

"Couldn't Dick go with us—if we *have* to go?" said Elfrida, suddenly.

"No," said Richard, "I'm not going to—so there!"

"Why?" Elfrida gasped, tugging at a great piece of chalk.

"Because I sha'n't."

"Then tell us what you meant, before the Mouldiwarp comes."

"You can't," said a little voice, "because it's come now."

Everyone sat back on its heels, and watched where out of the earth the white Mouldiwarp was squeezing itself up, between two blocks of chalk, into the sunlight.

"Why, I hadn't said any poetry," said Elfrida.

"I hadn't made the triangle or the arch," said old Betty Lovell. "Well, if ever I did!"

"I've been here," said the mole, looking round with something astonishingly like a smile of triumph, "all the time. Why shouldn't I go where I do please, now and again? Why should I allus wait on your bidding, eh?" it asked, a little pettishly.

"No reason at all," said Elfrida, kindly; "and now, dear, dear Mouldiwarp, please take us away."

"Here, come inside," said the mole.

"Inside where?" said Edred.

"Inside my house."

And then, whether they all got smaller or whether the crack in the chalk got bigger they never quite knew, but they found themselves walking into that crack one by one.

And the chalk closed over them all.

Then a sound like thunder shook the earth overhead.

"It's only the King's horses and the King's men hunting after you," said the Mouldiwarp. "Now I'll go and make a white clock for you to go home on. You set where you be, and don't touch nothing till I be come back again."

"Why," said Richard, suddenly, "don't you go and look for your father?"

"Father's dead, you know," said Elfrida.

"How do you know? You've been hunting for the beastly treasure, and never even tried to go back to the time when he was alive—such a little time ago—and find out what really did happen to him."

"I didn't know we *could*," said Elfrida, choking. "And even if we could it wouldn't be right, would it? Aunt Edith said he was in heaven. We couldn't go there, you know. It isn't like history—it's quite different."

"Well, then," said Richard, "I shall have to tell you. You know, I rather took a fancy to you two kids that Gunpowder Plot time; and after you'd gone back to your own times I asked Betty Lovell who you were, and she said you were Lord Arden. So the next time I wanted to get away from—from where I was—I gave orders to be taken to Lord Arden. And it——"

"Come along, do, dears," said the sudden voice of the Mouldiwarp. "The clock's all ready."

A soft light was pressing against their eyes—growing, growing. They saw now that they were in a great chalk cave—the smugglers' cave, Edred had hardly a doubt. And in the middle of its floor of smooth sand was a great clock-face—figures and hands and all—made of softly gleaming pearls set in ivory. Light seemed to flow from this, and to be reflected back on it by the white chalk walls. It was the most beautiful piece of jeweller's work that the children—or, I imagine, anyone else—had ever seen.

"Sit on the minute-hand," said the Mouldiwarp, "and home you go."

"You must come too," said Elfrida, and Richard yielding, they all sat down on the minute-hand, and before the Mouldiwarp could say a word Edred called out, "Take us to where daddy is."

And the minute-hand of pearl and ivory began to move faster and faster and faster, till, if there had been anyone to look at it, it would have been invisible.

But there wasn't anyone to look at it, for the Mouldiwarp had leaped on to the hour-hand at the last moment, and was hanging on there by all its claws.

CHAPTER XII.

THE FINDING OF THE TREASURE.

"SHALL I come along of you?" said the Mouldiwarp, when the clock stopped, and everyone said "Yes," very earnestly.

Then it waved a white paw at Edred and

There was something about the moss, or about the fur coats or the fur gloves, that somehow made it seem easier and more natural to follow on all fours—and really their hands were quite as useful to walk on as their feet. They followed Richard through the forest till quite abruptly a great cliff rose in front of them, ending the forest. There was a

"THEY ALL SAT DOWN ON THE MINUTE-HAND."

Elfrida, and at once they found themselves dressed in tight-fitting white fur dresses. Their hands even wore fat, white fur gloves with tiger claws at the ends of the fingers. At the same moment the Mouldiwarp grew big, to the size of a very small Polar bear, while Cousin Richard suddenly assumed the proportions of a giant.

They had stepped off the clock on to a carpet of thick moss. It was so soft to their feet that Edred and Elfrida wanted to feel it with their hands as well, so down they went on all fours. Then they longed to lie down and roll on it; they longed so much that they had to do it. It was a delicious sensation, rolling in the soft moss.

Cousin Richard, still very much too big, stood looking down on them and laughing.

"This," he said, "is a first-class lark. Shall I carry you?" he added politely, addressing the Mouldiwarp, who, rather surprisingly, consented.

"Come on," he said to the children, and as he went they followed him.

cleft in it; they saw the darkness of it rising above them as the moon came out from a cloud and shone full on the cliff's white face—and the face of the cliff and the shape of the cleft were very like that little cleft in the chalk that the Mouldiwarp had made when it had pulled up turf on the Sussex downs at home. And all this time Edred and Elfrida had never looked at each other. There had been so many other things to look at.

"That's the way," said Cousin Richard, pointing up the dark cleft. Though it was so dark Edred and Elfrida could plainly see there were no steps—only ledges that a very polite goat might have said were a foothold.

"You couldn't climb up there," Edred said to the great Richard; yet somehow he never doubted that he and Elfrida could.

"No," said the Mouldiwarp, leaping from Richard's arms to the ground, "I must carry him"—and it grew to giant Polar bear size quite calmly before their very eyes.

"They don't see it—even yet," said Richard to the mole.

"See what?" Elfrida asked.

"Why, what your disguise is. You're cats, my dear cousins, white cats!"

Then Edred and Elfrida did look at each other, and it was quite true, they *were*.

"I'll tell you what my plan is," Richard went on. "The people of this country have never seen tame cats. They think a person who can tame animals is a magician. I found that out when I was here before. So now I've got three tame animals—all white, too—that is, if you'll play," he added, to the Mouldiwarp. "You *will* play, won't you?"

"Oh, yes, I'll play!" it said, snarling a little.

"And you cats must only mew and purr and do whatever I tell you. Don't do anything for anyone but me and your father."

"Is father really here?" asked Elfrida.

"He's on the other side of the great cliff," said Richard—"the cliff no man can climb. But *you* can come."

He got on the Mouldiwarp's back and put his arms round its Polar-bear-like neck, and it began to climb. That *was* a climb. Even the cats, which Edred and Elfrida now could not help seeing that they were, found it as much as they could do to keep their footing on those little, smooth, shelving ledges. If it had not been that they had cat's eyes, and so could see in the dark, they never could have done it.

"I've heard of foreign climbs," said Elfrida, "but I never thought they would be like this. I suppose it *is* foreign?"

"South American," said Richard. "You can look for it on the map when you get home—but you won't find it. Come on!"

And then when they had climbed to the top of the cliff they had to go down on the other side, for the cliff rose like a wall between the forest and a wide plain, and by the time they reached that plain the sun was looking down at them over the cliff.

The plain was very large and very wonderful, and a towering wall of cliff ran all round it. The plain was all laid out in roads and avenues and fields and parks. Towns and palaces were dotted about it; a tall aqueduct on hundreds of pillars brought water from an arch in the face of the cliff to the middle of the plain, and from these canals ran out to the cliff wall that bounded the plain all round, even and straight, like the spokes of a wheel, and disappeared under low arches of stone, back into the cliff. There were lakes, there were gardens, there were great stone buildings whose roofs shone like gold where the rising sun struck them.

In the fields were long-horned cattle and strange, high-shouldered sheep, which Richard said were llamas.

"I know," he explained, "from seeing them on the postage-stamps."

They advanced into the plain and sat down under a spreading tree.

"We must just wait till we're found," said Richard, who had assumed entire command of the expedition.

Presently, a shepherd coming early to attend to his flocks found a boy in strange clothes, attended by a great white bear and two white cats, sitting under a tree.

The shepherd did not seem afraid of the bear—only curious and interested; but when the Mouldiwarp had stood up on its hind legs and bowed gravely and the cats had stood up and lain down and shaken paws and turned somersaults at the word of command, the shepherd wrapped his red woollen cloak round him with an air of determination and, making signs that Richard was to follow, set off with all his might for the nearest town.

Quite soon they found themselves in the central square of one of the most beautiful towns in the world. I wish I had time to tell you exactly what it was like, but I have not. I can only say that it was at once clean and grand, splendid and comfortable. There was not a dirty corner nor a sad face from one end of the town to the other. The houses were made of great blocks of stone inlaid wonderfully with gold and silver; clear streams—or baby canals—ran by the side of every street, and each street had a double row of trees running all along its wide length. There was a great hall in the middle of the town with a garden all round its flat roof, and to this hall the shepherd led the party.

The big doors of inlaid wood were set wide, and a crowd, all dressed in soft stuffs of beautiful colours, filled the long room within. The room was open to the sky; a wrinkled awning drawn close at one side showed that the people could have a roof when it suited them.

There was a raised stone platform at one end, and on this were three chairs. The crowd made way for the shepherd and his following, and as they drew near to the raised platform the two white cats, who were Edred and Elfrida, looked up and saw in the middle and biggest chair a splendid, dark-faced man in a kind of fringed turban with two long feathers in it, and in the two chairs to right and left of him, clothed in beautiful embroidered stuffs, with shining collars of jewels about their necks, Father and Uncle Jim!

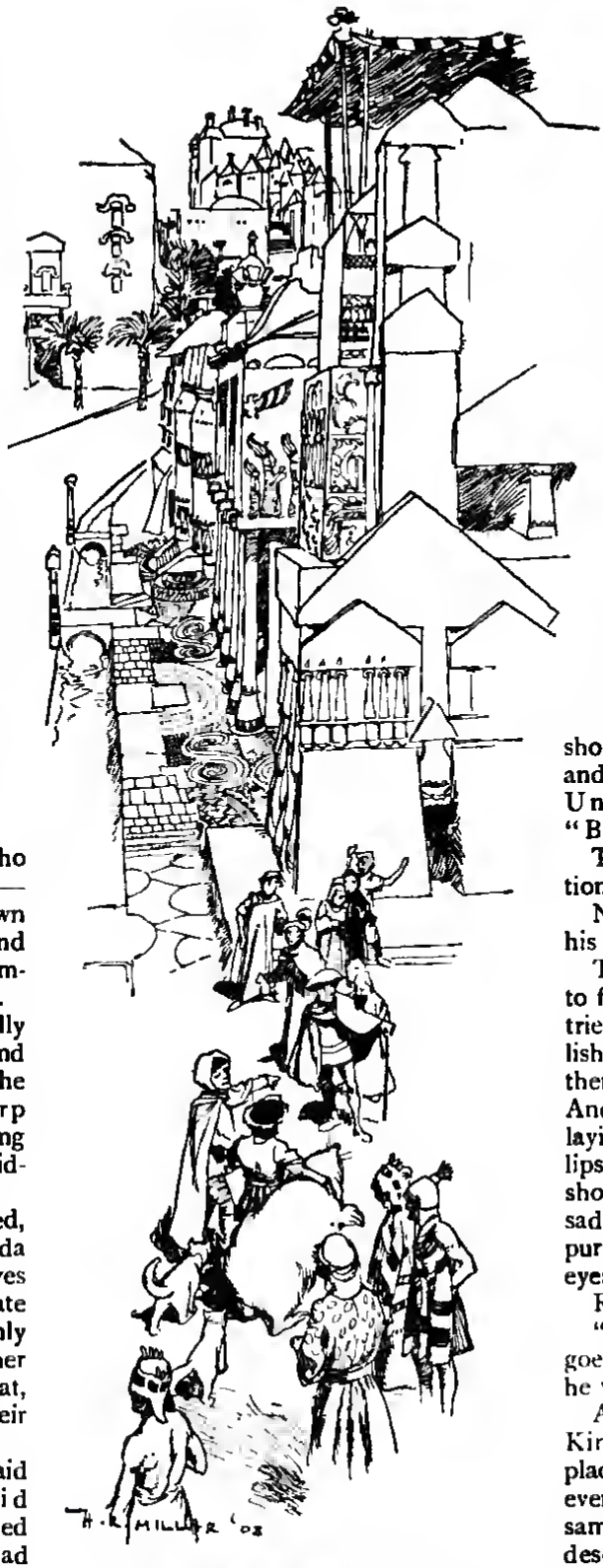
"Not a word!" said Cousin Dick, just in time to restrain the voices of the children who were cats. Their actions he could not restrain. Everyone in that hall saw two white cats spring forward and rub themselves against the legs of the man who sat in the right-hand chair. Compelled to silence as they were by the danger of their position, Edred and Elfrida rubbed their white-cat bodies against their father's legs in a rapture which I cannot describe, and purred enthusiastically. It is a wonderful relief to be able to purr when you must not speak.

The King—he who sat on the high seat—stood up, looking down on them with wise, kind eyes, and spoke, seeming to ask a question.

Quite as wonderfully as any trained bear, and far more gracefully, the white Mouldiwarp danced before the King of that mysterious hidden kingdom.

Then Dick whistled, and Edred and Elfrida withdrew themselves from their passionate caresses of the only parts of their father that they could get at, and stood upon their white hind-cat-feet.

"The minuet," said Edred, in a rapid whisper. Dick whistled a tune that they had never heard, but the tune was right; and now



"THE HOUSES WERE MADE OF GREAT BLOCKS OF STONE INLAID WONDERFULLY WITH GOLD AND SILVER."

was seen the spectacle of two white cats slowly and solemnly going through the figures of that complicated dance, to the music of Dick's clear whistling, turning, bowing, pacing with all the graces that Aunt Edith had taught them when they were Edred and Elfrida and not white cats.

When the last bow and curtsy ended the dance, the King himself shouted some word that they were sure meant "Well done!" All the people shouted the same word, and only father and Uncle Jim shouted "Bravo!"

Then the King questioned Dick.

No answer. He laid his finger on his lips.

Then the King spoke to father, and he in turn tried questions in English and French and then in other languages. And still Dick kept on laying his finger on his lips, and the white bear shook its head quite sadly, and the white cats purred aloud with their eyes on their father.

Richard stooped.

"When your father goes out, follow him," he whispered.

And so, when the King rose from his place and went out, and everyone else did the same, the white cats, deserting Dick, followed close on their father's footsteps.

When the King saw this he spoke to the men-at-arms, who were leading Richard in another direction, and presently the cats, and the bear that was the Mouldiwarp, and Richard found themselves alone with Uncle Jim and the father of Elfrida and Edred on a beautiful terrace shaded by trees.

And now, there being none of the brown people near, Richard looked full in the eyes of the father of Edred and Elfrida and said, in a very low voice:—

"I am English. I've come to rescue you."

"You're a bold boy," said Edred and Elfrida's father, "but rescue's impossible."

"There's not much time," said Richard again; "they've only let us come here just to see if you know us. I expect they're listening. You are Lord Arden now—the old lord is dead. I can get you out if you do exactly as I say."

"It's worth trying," said Uncle Jim; "it's worth trying, anyhow, whatever it is."

"Are ynu free to go where you like?"

"Yes," said Lord Arden—not Edred, but Edred's father, for Edred was now no longer Lord Arden. "You see there's no way out but the one, and that's guarded by a hundred men with poisoned arrows."

"There *is* another way," said Richard; "the way we came. The white bear can carry you, one at a time."

"Shall we risk it?" said Lord Arden, a little doubtfully.

"Rather!" said Uncle James. "Think of Edith and the kids."

"That's what I *am* thinking of," said Lord Arden; "while we're alive there's a chance. If we try this and fail they'll kill us."

"You won't fail," said Richard. "I'll help you to get home; but I would like to know how you got into this fix. It's only curiosity. But I wish you'd tell me. Perhaps I sha'n't see you again after to-day."

"We stumbled on the entrance, the only entrance to the golden plain," said Lord Arden, "prospecting for gold among these mountains. They have kept us prisoners ever since, because they are determined not to let the world know of the existence of the plain. There are always rumours of it, but so far no 'civilized' people have found it."

The white cats noticed with wonder and respect that their father addressed Richard exactly as though he had been a grown-up.

"We managed to send one line to a newspaper, to say that we were taken by bandits," Lord Arden went on; "it was all that they would allow us to do. But except that we have not been free, we have had everything—food, clothes, kindness, justice, love. We *must* escape, if we can, because of my sister and the children, but it is like going out of Eden into the Black Country."

"That's so," said Uncle Jim.

"And if we're not to see you again," Lord Arden went on, "tell me why you have come—at great risk it must be—to help us."

"I owe a debt," said Richard, in a low voice, "to all who bear the name of Arden." His voice sank so low that the two cats could only hear the words "head of the house."

"And now," Richard went on, "you see that black chink over there?" he pointed to the crevice in the cliff. "Be there, both of you, at moonrise, and you shall get away safely to Arden Castle."

"You must come with us, of course," said Lord Arden. "I might be of service to you. We have quite a respectable little fortune in a bank at Lima—not in our own names—but we can get it out, if you can get *us* out. You've brought us luck, I'm certain of it. Won't you go with us, and share it?"

"I can't," said Richard; "I must go back to my own time . . . my own place, I mean. Now I'll go. Come on, cats."

The cats looked imploringly at their father, but they went and stood by Richard.

"I suppose we *may* gu?" he asked.

"Everyone is perfectly free here," said Lord Arden. "The only thing you may not do is to leave the golden plain."

The white cats looked at each other rather ruefully. This was not at all the way in which they remembered their daddy talking to them.

"But," said Lord Arden, "for the children and my sister we must risk it. I trust you completely, and we will be at the crevice when the moon rises."

And at the appointed hour they all met under the vast cliff that was the natural wall and guardian of the golden plain.

And the Mouldiwarp carried Uncle Jim up to the top, and then came back for Lord Arden and Richard. But before there was time to do more a shout went up, and a thousand torches sprang to life in the city they had left, and they knew that their flight had been discovered.

"There's no time," the white Bear-Mouldiwarp, to the utter astonishment of Lord Arden, opened its long mouth and spoke. And the white cats also opened their mouths and cried, "Oh, daddy, how awful! What shall we do?"

"Hold your silly tongues," said the Mouldiwarp, crossly. "You was told not

to go gossiping. Here! scratch a way out with them white paws of yours."

It set the example, scratching at the enormous cliff with its strong, blunt, curved front feet. And the cats scratched too, with their white padded gloves that had tiger claws to them. And the rock yielded—there was a white crack—wider, wider. And the swaying, swirling torches came nearer and nearer across the plain.

"In with you!" cried the Mouldiwarp; "in with you!"

"Jim!" said Lord Arden. "I'll not go without Jim!"

"He's half-way there already," said the Mouldiwarp. "Come, I say, come!" It pushed them all into the crack of the rock, and the cliff closed firm and fast behind them, an unanswerable "*No*" set up in the face of their pursuers.

"This way out," said the Mouldiwarp, pointing its claw to where light showed.

"Why," said Edred, "it's the smugglers' cave—and there's the clock!"

"AND THE ROCK YIELDED—THERE WAS A WHITE CRACK—WIDER, WIDER."

Next moment there it wasn't, for Richard had leapt on it, and he and it had vanished together, the Mouldiwarp clinging to the hour-hand at the last moment.

The white cats which were Edred and Elfrida drew back from the whirl of the hands that was the first step towards vanishment. They saw their father and Uncle Jim go up the steps that led to the rude wooden door whose key was like a church key—the door that led to the opening among the furze that they had never been able to find again.

When the vanishing of the clock allowed them to follow, and they regained the sunny outer air, they were just in time to see two figures going towards the castle and very near it.

They turned to look at each other.

"Why," said Edred, "you're not a cat any more!"

"No more are you, if it comes to that," said Elfrida. "Oh, Edred, they're going in at the big gate. Do you think it's really real—or have we just dreamed it—this time? It was much more dreamish than any of the other things."

"I feel," said Edred, sitting down abruptly, "as if I'd been a cat all my life, and been swung round by my tail every day of my

life. I think I'll sit here till I'm quite sure whether I'm a white cat or Edred Arden."

"I know which *I* am," said Elfrida; but she, too, was not sorry to sit down.

"That's easy. You aren't either of them," said Edred.

When, half an hour later, they slowly went down to the castle, still doubtful whether anything magic had ever really happened, or whether all the magic things that had seemed to happen had really been only a sort of double, or twin, dream, they were met at the door by Aunt Edith, pale as the pearl and ivory of the white clock, and with eyes that shone like the dewdrops on the wild flowers that Elfrida had given to the Queen.

"Oh, kiddies!" she cried. "Oh, dear, darling kiddies!"

And she went down nn her knees so that she should be nearer their own height and could embrace them on more equal terms.

"Something lovely's happened," she said; "something so beautiful that you won't be able to believe it."

They kissed her heartily, partly out of affection and partly to conceal their want of surprise.

"Darlings, it's the loveliest thing that could possibly happen. What do you think?"

"Daddy's come home," said Elfrida, feeling dreadfully deceitful.

"Yes," said Aunt Edith. "How clever of you, my pet! And Uncle Jim. They've been kept prisoners in South America, and an English boy with a performing bear belped them to escape."

No mention of cats. The children felt hurt.

"And they had the most dreadful time—months and months and months—coming across the interior—no water, and Indians and all sorts of adventures; and daddy had fever, and would insist that the bear was the Mouldiwarp—our crest, you know—come to life, and talking just like you or me, and that there were white cats that had your voices, and called him daddy. But he's all right now, only very weak. That's why I'm telling you all this. You must be very quiet and gentle. Oh, my dears, it's too good to be true, too good to be true!"

Now, was it the father of Edred and Elfrida who had brain fever and fancied things? Or did they, blameless of fever, and not too guilty of brains, imagine it all? Uncle Jim can tell you exactly how it all happened. There is no magic in *his* story. Father — I mean Lord Arden—does not talk of what he dreamed when he had brain fever. And Edred and Elfrida do not talk of what happened when they hadn't it. At least they do, but only to me. It is all very wonderful and mysterious, as all life is apt to be if you go a little below the crust, and are not content just to read newspapers and go by the Tube Railway, and buy your clothes ready-made, and think nothing can be true unless it is uninteresting.

"I've found the most wonderful photographs of pictures of Arden Castle," said Aunt Edith, later on. "We can restore the castle perfectly from them. I do wish I knew where the original pictures were."

"I'm afraid we can't restore the castle," said Lord Arden, laughing; "our little fortune's enough to keep us going quite comfortably—but it won't rebuild Norman masonry."

"I do wish we could have found the buried treasure," said Edred.

"We've got treasure enough," said Aunt Edith, looking at Uncle Jim.

As for what Elfrida thinks—well, I wish you could have seen her face when she went into the parlour that evening after Aunt Edith had knelt down to meet them on equal terms, and tell them of the treasure of love and joy that had come home to Arden.

There was Lord Arden, looking exactly like the Lord Arden she had known in the Gunpowder Plot days, and also exactly like the daddy she had known all her life, sitting at ease in the big chair just underneath the secret panel behind which Sir Edward Talbot had hidden when he was pretending to be the Chevalier St. George. His dear face was just the same, and the smile on it was her own smile—the merry, tender, twinkling smile that was for her and for no one else in the world. It was just a moment that she stood at the door. But it was one of these moments that are as short as a watch-tick and as long as a year. She stood there and asked herself, "Have I dreamed it all? Isn't there really any Mouldiwarp or aoy treasure?"

And then a great wave of love and longing caught at her, and she knew that, Mouldiwarp or no Mouldiwarp, the treasure was hers, and in one flash she was across the room and in her father's arms, sobhing and laughing, and saying again and again:—

"Oh, my daddy! Oh, my daddy, my daddy!"

THE END.